



Window on Jordan

Candidates offer voters a free ride to polling stations

By Star Staff Writer

IT HAD to happen on elections day. The country was drenched on the day when the nation went to the polls. It was cold, wet and soggy, but this didn't stop many voters from casting their vote.

What was irritating, and certainly heightened tempers of ordinary people was the lack of public transport during Tuesday's elections.

All over the country public transport was effectively paralyzed. It was as if taxis, service cars and buses vanished from the roads.

But this is far from the truth as was noticed by anyone going to polling stations. Buses, trucks and taxis in Amman, and no doubt the rest of the Kingdom,

were all huddled around polling stations, some dropping off voters, and some waiting to fill up and go for another round. No, they haven't all of a sudden changed directions, as someone sarcastically suggested.

The plain and simple truth is that the elections presented owners of means of public transport a good business. They were hired to carry "loyal voters" to polling stations. The elections presented a chance that happens every four years to make a quick buck.

An offshoot advantage, as one taxi driver in Naur commented, was that drivers got to vote themselves, something which they probably wouldn't do otherwise.

And in this respect, the 524 candidates standing for

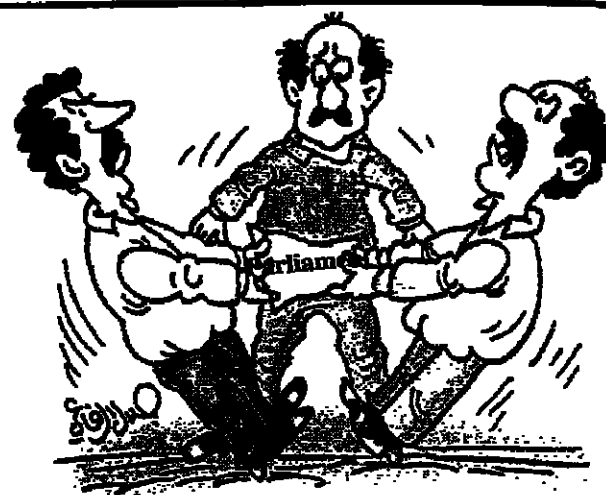
elections around the country were overtly generous. They were only too willing to rent all these forms of public transport vehicles for their own private use.

It was part of the election extravaganza. Candidates were not about to rely on voter promises. They were willing to make sure that supporters got a free ride to the polling stations. Some voters complained that once they emerged from the polling station their ride home was nowhere to be seen.

After exercising her right to vote, one middle aged lady standing outside an election center in Sweileh shouted on top of her head "were is that bus?"

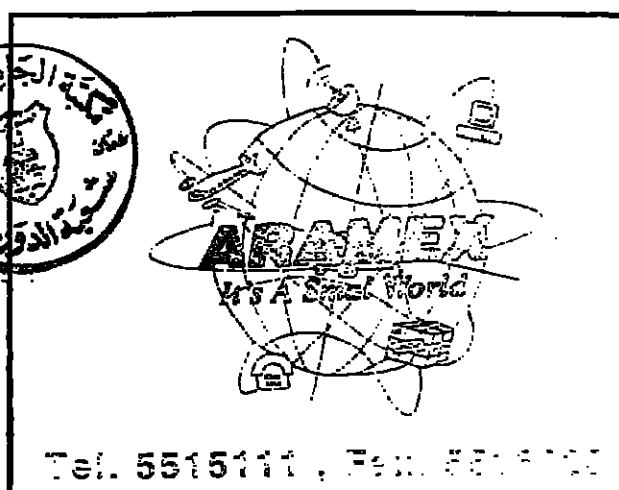
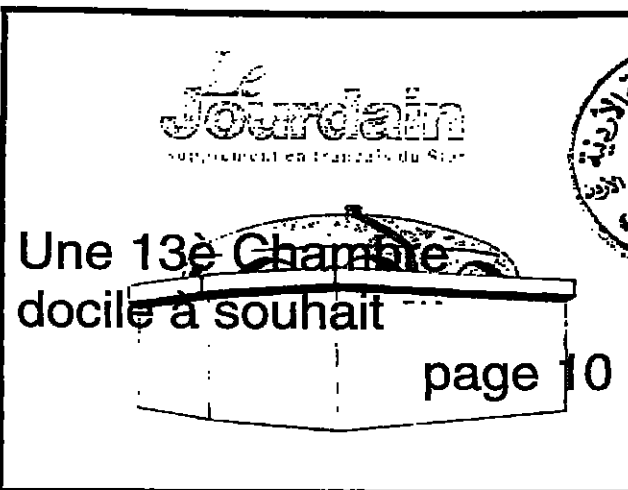
After asking her if she voted for the candidate who

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The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly



AMMAN, 6 — 12 NOVEMBER 1997, VOLUME 8, NUMBER 24, 350 FILS

اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

Low turn-out by voters in urban areas

Independents, tribal heads make up two-third of Lower House

King says democratic march will continue, expresses satisfaction with electoral process

By a Star Staff Writer

RAIN, COLD weather and opposition boycott of the polls have not hampered the 4 November elections for the 13th Jordanian Parliament. More than 800,000 Jordanians, about 54% of registered voters, turned out to cast their vote for the 80-seat Lower House. But it was the lowest turn-out yet, compared to the two previous elections.

The absence of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) and eight other leftist and pan-Arabist opposition parties in protest has not affected candidates' enthusiasm for parliament. However, turn out appeared to be markedly low.

In some districts, especially in the capital and Zarqa, voter participation did not exceed 20% reflecting a general malaise in urban areas. But it was a different matter altogether in closed bedouin districts and in rural areas where participation reached 80% in some cases.

Generally, the highest voter turn out was in the northern and southern constituencies with Tafleeh at 78 percent was the highest. Similarly high figures were registered in the North Bedouin, Koura and North Ghor districts, Mid-Bedouin, Mafrqa, and Karak.

With only 37 percent, the districts of Amman recorded one of the lowest turn outs in a long time.

No major incidents were reported throughout the day and there was a general feeling that the polls were free and fair. Ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic community in the Kingdom and foreign journalists visited a number of polling stations to observe the election process.

But the 1997 elections have changed the political map of the country. With the IAF and



the Muslim Brotherhood officially boycotting the elections, independent candidates were able to leave their stamp on the coming Lower House. Moderate and tribal representatives now make up more than two-third of the House with fewer members representing the Islamists, Baathist and Nationalist trends.

The election campaign on the whole was seen by some observers as lackluster with many issues left untackled. The National Constitutional Party (NCP), a right of center party headed by Abdel Hadi Majali, has failed to carry the majority of its candidates to the Lower House. NCP's secretary general, running in Karak, came in third with his relative-rival Amjad Majali clinching more votes. Both will represent their district in the new Lower House.

Another NCP candidate, former deputy and minister Abdel Raouf Sawabdeh won his seat back in Irbid. Mifteh Ruheimi, also from the NCP, was re-elected in Irbid for the Amman Third district Christian seat, was able to win his seat back in spite of the recent arrest of his son on drug smuggling allegations. Bassam Haddadin, who was a member of the 1989 and 1993 parliaments, won his seat back in Zarqa. Another leftist, Nazih Ammarin (Karak) was also re-elected.

In Amman's fifth district, ultra-nationalist and former deputy (1989) Ahmad Owaidi Abbadi made a successful comeback, while in Balqa, two incumbent independent deputies, Samir Qawar and Fawzi Tuemeh, were re-elected. They were joined by Abdel Razzaq Nsour, who is considered a moderate.

In Madaba, a former Ba'athist, Nashed Hamarneh, won his bid for the Christian seat in that district and so did Ali Abu Ragheb, who was re-elected for the Muslim seat in Amman's Third District.

On the Islamists' front, Mohammad Ra'fat, former member of the Shura Council, won in Balqa through the support of Palestinians in the Baqa'a refugee camp. Also Abdallah Akaleih (Tafleeh), Mohammad Azaideh (Madaba), Abdel Majid Al Aqtash (Amman Second District), Lutfi Barghouti (Third District) and Bakhit Al Ma'ayah (southern bedouin)

won seats in the coming Lower House. So did moderate Islamist Abdel Razzaq Tubeishat who won his seat back in Irbid.

The General Secretary of the opposition Arab Land Party Mohammad Al Ouran won in Tafleeh and so did former speaker of the Lower House Saad Hayel Srou (north bedouin) and former deputy and minister Abdel Karim Al Dughmi (Mafrqa). Journalist Hamadeh Faraneh made a successful bid for the Muslim seat in Amman's First District along with Fawzi Zuhbi in Ramtha and Bani Kinana.

His Majesty King Hussein visited the Press Center at the Royal Cultural Center on Tuesday and talked to members of the local and foreign press. He expressed his approval of the election process and added that the elections were fair and called on Jordanians to face future challenges. He rejected charges that the coming Lower House will be used to pass resolutions related to the Palestinian issue and described them as sick.

The King, who was accompanied by HRH Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdel Salam Majali, said Jordan is committed to the democratic march. He added that improvements will be made on the elections law in the future, but added that a final decision on the separation between the executive and



WOMEN FACTOR: A woman in Baqa'a camp north of Amman distributes campaign cards on behalf of a candidate who is running in the Balqa district. Women participation in the 1997 elections, whether as voters or candidates, was the highest ever. But none of the 17 women candidates contesting the elections was able to reach the 13 Parliament. The only woman deputy in the last Lower House, Toujan Faisal, failed in her re-election bid. See related stories inside. (Photo by Mahmoud Shawkat)

elections for the Amman Third district.

Former deputy Khalil Haddadin, running on an Arab Socialist Baath Party ticket for the Amman Third district Christian seat, was able to win his seat back in spite of the recent arrest of his son on drug smuggling allegations.

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legislative has not been made yet.

The new Parliament is expected to convene within the coming two weeks. Reports of an impending government change have not been confirmed.

Observers believe the elections has produced a low turnout in urban areas but a higher turnout in rural and bedouin ones. They fear that it will enforce political differences between these and also between predominantly Palestinian and East Bank Jordanian areas.

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Iraq pushes back deadline for American inspectors to leave

By John M. Goshko

UNITED NATIONS—Iraq said Tuesday that it will postpone its Wednesday deadline for American weapons inspectors to leave the country and will not expel them while UN envoys are in Baghdad seeking to avert a confrontation between President Saddam Hussein's government and the world body. The Iraqi move should put off for at least two or three days what had loomed as a showdown Wednesday over Saddam's demand for the removal of all US citizens working for the UN Special Commission charged with eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

A three-member diplomatic mission is en route to Baghdad to convince Saddam that the 15-nation Security Council is unanimous in insisting Iraq must cooperate with weapons inspectors on the world body's terms. The mission is to arrive hours before the original Iraqi deadline for the withdrawal of the seven Americans working on the inspection team.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan requested the postponement of the deadline in a call to Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, who will meet with the envoys. Several hours later, Annan's office issued a statement saying Aziz had replied "that the government of Iraq will comply with his request. He has been assured that no members of the team will be expelled from Iraq while his envoys are in the country."

In response, Annan asked Richard Butler, the Australian diplomat who heads UNSCOM, as the inspection team is known, to postpone the U-2 reconnaissance plane flight over Iraq scheduled for the latter part of this week. Sunday, Iraq had warned that its anti-aircraft guns and missiles might attack any U-2 flights.

Butler said that he was suspending the flight to permit the UN envoys to present their message. He added that the U-2 flights will be resumed next week and he will so inform Iraqi authorities. During a brief exchange with reporters, Annan was asked about reports from Baghdad that Aziz might come to the Security Council next week. Annan replied: "It is not excluded. He has indicated that he would want to be here when the Security Council takes up the report of the mission."

While Annan welcomed Aziz's response as "a positive beginning of the talks," there was no indication whether the additional time would enable Iraq and the world body to veer away from a test of wills that could result in military action against Baghdad. Tuesday, in his first public remarks about the standoff, President Clinton said Saddam must comply with the UN weapons inspection program.

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America is accused, by its friends, of bullying the world

By William Drozdzick

BERLIN—Through the eyes of much of the world, the resurgence of the United States and its ascendancy as the world's only superpower has been one of the most dramatic developments since the passing of the Cold War. Historians who once warned about America's decline now gush about an age of unrivaled dominance.

But over the past few months, irritation and anxiety have begun to overshadow sentiments of admiration among America's closest allies, across Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa, convictions are growing that the accumulation of so much po-

litical, economic and cultural clout by the United States is breeding an arrogance that is unpleasant and possibly dangerous.

"Never before in modern history has a country dominated the earth totally as the United States does today," the German news magazine Spiegel reported in a recent cover story. "American idols and icons are shaping the world from Kaimandu to Kinshasa, from Cairo to Caracas. Globalization wears a 'Made in USA' label. The Americans are acting, in the absence of limits put to them by anybody or anything, as if they own a blank check in

their 'McWorld.' Strengthened by the end of communism and an economic boom, Washington seems to have abandoned its self-doubts from the Vietnam trauma. America is now the Schwarzenegger of international politics: showing off muscles, obtrusive, intimidating."

The chorus of dismay with America's overwhelming power has grown louder lately as the United States finds itself increasingly accused of bullying the rest of the world. Indeed, the United States is discovering that its behavior has come under sharper scrutiny from friendly nations that no longer feel prevented by Cold War loyalties from expressing their disagreements with Washington.

At the United Nations, intimate allies such as Britain and Germany have

not shrunk from excoriating America's refusal to pay as much as \$1 billion in past dues, its reluctance to increase spending on foreign aid to poor countries and its rejection of a worldwide ban on land mines.

Among some 150 delegations gathered last week in Bonn to craft a global warming treaty, there was almost unanimous disapproval of President Clinton's proposals to curtail production of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. And the most virulent criticism came from countries long considered Washington's closest partners.

"How can the Americans, with around 5 percent of the world's population, go on accounting for a quarter of its greenhouse gases? This flagrant

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World
Report

In Baqa'a, voters do not expect life to improve

By Raed Al Abed

Star Staff Writer
BAQA'A CAMP—Seventy-year-old Palestinian refugee, Abu Muhsein, has been living in Baqa'a camp, 20 kilometers north of Amman, since 1967. At his age he says he has no hope of seeing Palestine liberated from Israeli occupation. But he wishes to be buried in his homeland. "I want to rest under the soil of Palestine," he says as he left the ballot station

after casting his vote. Leaning on his crutch, and guided by his eldest son, Fadi, Abu Muhsein who voted for an independent Islamist candidate, believes that his "vote will make little difference, but it might bring attention to this forgotten (Baqa'a) camp."

Many voters in this camp of 85,000 have followed Abu Muhsein's stance. The camp is in dire need of essential services. "The camp should be

represented in Parliament. In other words someone should represent Palestinian refugees," says Khalil, 28, who sympathizes with the boycott decision of opposition parties. But he voted for an independent Islamist, because

"somebody has to carry our voices to decision makers and to the world. In front of the four voting centers, two for men and two for women, inside the camp, huge crowds congregated, in contrast with the scene in Amman on rainy Tuesday.

Despite the strong influence of the Islamic movement in this camp, voters, particularly middle aged and the elderly, ignored the boycott decision and headed for polling stations.

Women voters outnumbered men and by the afternoon at least 30 percent of the total registered women voters in the camp had voted compared to only 15 percent of male voters.

However, many residents here had lost hope of any improvement in their living conditions coming their way soon. Maisara, 32, who teaches

Arabic at one of the schools at the camp, stood in front of one of the voting centers, keeping his voting card in his pocket. "No one deserves my vote. I trust no one," he says. "The situation in the camp is miserable. The previous representatives did nothing, and the coming ones will change nothing."

Youngsters in the camp were an easy target for bribes from candidates from outside the camp. "One candidate paid me JD 20, but I did not vote for him. I voted for Mohammad Ra'fat (independent Islamist)," a 20-year-old man says.

The independent Islamist candidate Mohammad Ra'fat, who is living in the camp, praises the election process. He says the process was fair and legal. Ra'fat, who was a member of the Shura Council of the Muslim Brotherhood, believes that "it is better to fight for Islamic principles from inside Parliament, because it is the only place where you can bring changes." Among his campaign promises is to bring down the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. ■



People flock to the polling stations as rain subsides

By Elise Y. Sadoun

IRBID—As the campaign season wound down, a frenzy of last-minute advertising plays were put into effect. Groups of children were sent out with banners, and a slogan-jingle to sing as they ran around the streets in support of their favorite candidate. Last Monday night, campaigners circled the town in their slogan-decorated cars shouting until eleven o'clock at night.

Activity at the various polling stations varied throughout Irbid and the Ramtha and Bani Kanana districts. Voters trickled in throughout the morning, but once the rain stopped after lunch, a flood of voters took to the streets. Irbid's Rashed street voting station, though

calm in the morning, was guarded by four or five police officers at the entrance.

People calmly handed over their voter cards for inspection before allowed entrance. By afternoon, a horde of taxis surrounded the polling station, dropping off passengers, and waiting for exiting voters.

In Samer, where a large number of people were supporting Dr. Ghazi Obeidat, the man's voting station, though calm in the morning, became a flurry of activity following the cessation of rain. Mr. Jamal Ahmad Sadoun, engineer and businessman, voted in the morning and said the process was very smooth and fast. "The officials were very polite and I was pleased to vote for Dr. Ghazi Obeidat because he is my cou-

sin and a very great man."

Many voters lent their support to family members or fellow villagers. Mr. Mohammad Mahmoud Al Omani said, "I voted for Mr. Helmi Tawabi because he does not belong to any party and he is from the same village as me (Saham)." When asked about his voting experience he said, "I am quite happy with the voting I had no trouble. It was a kind and cooperative atmosphere."

Women came out in groups or with their families to register their votes. Haji Adnania Al Kurdi, a 75-year-old widow, said that she went to the polls with her daughters and daughters-in-law. She found the voting process "nice and organized. There were a lot of women

there, and when you finished your voting you had to leave right away to prevent crowding. Some women, although overall satisfied with the voting process, encountered some problems. One teenage girl, accompanying her 80-year-old crippled aunt who could not stand, walk, or steady her hand without help, was refused permission to help her to vote. When her repeated pleas were denied, she entered the booth with her aunt anyway. Another woman, taking refuge from the pouring rain, was ordered to wait outside. Only when another guard recognized her as the wife of the district judge, was she left alone.

As the day wore on, the candidates made their exhausting last pleas for votes, by visiting various villages and parking their slogan-decorated cars outside polling stations. Although only about 54 percent of registered voters made it to the polls, it was a good and fair election.

By seven in the evening, when polling booths were sealed, many voters were turned away because they had no election cards. "I tried to find my card but I couldn't. I have two cards for my two brothers who live abroad while mine has vanished," said an angry trader. He was told to go to the Amman Governorate and from there he was sent to another polling station, but without success.

Finally he gave up and along with friends and relatives, who had the same problem, they went home. There were similar complaints of duplicate voting cards.

Tallying the votes continued until the small hours of the morning. The results were not surprising. Two independents, Ali Abul-Raghib and Raed Al Bakri clinched two seats, while an Islamist, Lofu Al Barghouti, took the third.

The Christian seat went to former deputy Khaled Haddadin of the Jordanian Socialist Arab Ba'ath Party, in spite of his son's arrest recently for his alleged connection to drug smuggling.

The fight for the Circassian/Chochen seat ended with the incumbent Toujan Faisal, the only woman deputy in the previous Parliament, losing out to government backed rival Nayef Moulah. ■



Toujan Faisal as she leaves the counting center after midnight, Wednesday.

Third district: A quiet day for voters

By Ibtisam Awadat
Special to The Star

AMMAN—Amman's Third District has been described by some as the deserted constituency as ballot stations witnessed low turnout in Tuesday's elections. The morning drizzle added to the district's serenity: polling stations were empty but of the members of the committees and the representatives of the candidates. The quietness belied the high number of registered voters, 117,217, for whose votes 19 candidates were competing to win one of the district's five seats.

At one station, where 527 voters are registered, and three hours after voting began, only seven voters had cast their ballots. The head of a committee responsible for elections said attendance was very little. "Maybe it's the weather," he lamented adding that only 62% of the voters had actually received their cards.

Faten is one of the representatives for a candidates at the polling station "I volunteered to do this, but others could be paid. It depends on them," she said.

The public holiday was a good occasion for children to play in the streets or distribute the campaign cards. Buses stopped in front of electoral headquarters to transport supporters to polling centers.

By mid-day, nothing had changed. "Why should I vote? I only want to do my job to go home and sleep," a taxi driver told The Star. Such apathy reflected the prevailing frustration among a large chunk of the district's electorate.

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Who is who in the 13th Lower House of parliament

Amman

First District: Three Muslim seats:

■ Rashed Al Barayseh: Lawyer
■ Khalil Atiyeh: Businessman/Independent
■ Hamada Farasneh: Journalist/Independent

Second District: Three Muslim seats:

■ Abdel Majid Al Aqtash: Ex-Muslim Brotherhood
■ Mohammad Al Kouz: School teacher/Independent
■ Mohammad Al Thweib: Centrist

Third District: Three Muslim seats/one Circassian/one Christian:

■ Ali Abul Ragheb: Ex-minister/Moderate
■ Raad Al Bakri: Independent
■ Lutfi Barghouti: Independent Islamist
■ Khalil Haddadin: Christian seat, Contractor/Baathist
■ Nayef Moulah: Circassian seat, ex-government official

Fourth District: Two Muslim seats:

■ Birjes Al Hadid: Tribal Judge
■ Hamad Abu Zeid: Tribal

Fifth District: Four Muslim seats/one Circassian

■ Mohammad Abu Hudeib: Doctor
■ Ahmad Ovidi Al Abhadi: Ultra-nationalist
■ Ahmad Al Ajarmeh: tribal
■ Asaaf Abd Rabou Al Asaaf: Tribal
■ Munir Sobar: Circassian seat, former minister

Madaba: Two Muslim seats/One Christian

■ Mohammad Al Azaideh: Ex-IAF member
■ Ali Abu Rbeih: tribal
■ Nashaat Hamareh: Christian seat, Physician/former Baathist

Irbid: Eight Muslim seats/one Christian

■ Mohammad Bani Hani: Tribal
■ Mohammad Bataineh: Tribal
■ Abdel Raouf Rawabdeh: Ex-minister/NCP
■ Majed Ababneh: Tribal
■ Sami Khassawneh: Tribal
■ Saleh Sha'wata: Moderate
■ Kamel Al Omani: Tribal
■ Abdel Razzaq Tbeishat: ex-minister/centrist
■ Razi Haddad: Christian seat, independent

Jerash: Two Muslim seats

■ Riadh Othman: Tribal
■ Mifleh Ruheimi: NCP

Karak: Seven Muslim seats/two Christians:

■ Khaled Tarawneh: Tribal
■ Amjad Majali: Ex-Ambassador/Tribal

■ Ayed Adhayleh: Tribal

■ Abdul Hadi Majali: Ex-minister/NCP
■ Mohammad Amr: tribal
■ Riad Sareh: Tribal
■ Mansour Ben Tarif: Tribal former minister, deputy
■ Abdallah Zureiqi: Tribal
■ Nazih Ammarin: Christian Centrist

Ma'an: Three Muslim seats

■ Ahmad Salehian: Abu Uqla Tribal
■ Walid Awajan: Tribal
■ Nayef Hilalal: Tribal

Aqaba: Two Muslim seats

■ Mohammad Al Badri: independent surgeon
■ Ziad Al Shweikh: Independent

Zarqa: Four Muslim seats/one Circassian/one Christian

■ Nu'man Gheir: tribal
■ Mohammad Khalaileh: Tribal
■ Mikhlef Zawabreh: Tribal
■ Adnan Mirai: Centrist
■ Bassam Haddadin: Christian seat, leftist
■ Mansour Murad: leftist

Mafrag: Three Muslim seats

■ Abdel Karim Al Dughmi: ex-minister/Tribal
■ Mohammad Abu Aleem: Ex-minister/Tribal
■ Nawaf Al Khawaldeh: Tribal

Tafleh: Three Muslim seats

■ Pan-Arabist
■ Abdallah Akaileh: Ex-IAF member/Tribal
■ Sukki Al Shabat: Tribal

Central Bedouins: Two Muslim seats

■ Saleh Al Jbour: Tribal
■ Ghazi Al Fayez: Tribal

Northern Bedouins: Two Muslim seats

■ Saad Hayel Srou: Tribal
■ Deifallah Ku'eiber: Tribal

Southern Bedouins: Two Muslim seats

■ Abdullah Al Jazi: Ex-minister/Tribal
■ Bakht Al Manay'a: Islamist

Ajloun: Two Muslim seats/One Christian

■ Hazem Momani: Tribal
■ Ahmad Annab: Tribal
■ Ridha Haddad: Christian seat, tribal

Ramtha & Bani Kinana: Three Muslim seats

■ Fawwaz Zu'bi: Tribal
■ Ghazi Obeidat: Centrist
■ Osama Al Malkawi: Lawyer/Centrist

Koura & Northern Jordan Valley: Two Muslim seats

■ Mijhem Al Suqour: Tribal
■ Yousef Shreideh: Centrist

Balqa: Six Muslim seats/Two Christian

■ Mohammad Ra'fat: ex-Muslim Brotherhood member
■ Ghaleb Al Zu'bi: Tribal
■ Mahmoud Kharabsheh: Tribal
■ Abdul Al Razzaq Ensour: Moderate
■ Salameh Al Hiyari: Tribal
■ Saoud Al Edwan: Tribal
■ Samir Kassar: Christian seat, former minister
■ Fawzi Tu'eimeh: Christian seat, centrist

was justifiable, she was not convinced and she rushed outside shouting and swearing.

The general mood among women was not that much encouraging. "I failed to convince my neighbors to come with me, but I think it's my national duty to cast my vote—believe me our vote makes a difference," Fatima Mohammed said.

Hayat Al Mimi, a headmistress told The Star that "this year women are given much support than 1993 elections and I expect that majority of women voters to participate in the decision making process and they should." ■

Russeifa's women know they can make a difference

By Ilham Sadeq
Star Staff Writer

ZARQA—Unlike any other day, the streets leading to the polling stations in Russeifa, five kilometers west of Zarqa, were unusually quiet on Tuesday, when the nation went to the polls to elect its representatives for the 13th Parliament. No car horns were sounded and traffic was minimal in the commonly congested streets.

People seemed to be hiding in their houses—somehow isolated from the elections outside. But what was astonishing was the crowds of young pupils filling the streets although it was a public holiday. Some were campaigning for candidates in a last-minute attempt to influence voters. Two female students, wearing coloured sashes with the name of their candidate around their chests, were hiding under an umbrella to protect themselves from the rain. As soon as

either of them sees a woman entering Amnah Bint Wahab school for girls, which was one of the polling stations, she would rush to give her a card of their candidate.

"I know that there is only one woman contesting in the elections, but had she asked me to be one of her campaigners this day, I would not hesitate to accept," Mona Ali told The Star.

The other student standing close to her said in a timid way, "this candidate is backed by our family, but I think that women representatives in the Parliament can help us a great deal, even better than male deputies." The two stressed that women are suppressed in our society and need to get their full rights and be more active.

Outside the school was a young woman carrying a baby and seizing two small children. Yusra Khalaileh, who had already given her vote, was happy and stressed that women should

give their votes and must not be passive. Speaking while her uncle, an old man was looking at her, she gave assurances that women votes are independently expressed. "No one imposes pressure on me to elect a certain candidate."

Inside the school, ballots were properly checked and the supervising committees (mostly comprising a head and two members) were performing their task in a quiet atmosphere.

During the first hours of the day till mid-day polling in some stations in Russeifa and Zarqa was below 9%. However, in other stations, closer to tribal presence, polling had reached more than 30% at one station by mid-day.

Another woman at Shajrat Al Durr School at Zarqa complained to a policeman standing outside the polling hall that her name was not in the voters' rosters. Though the committee's stance not to allow her to vote

military force capable of acting in all parts of the world. It has spawned 10 million new jobs in the past four years while other Western countries struggle with persistently high unemployment.

American mass entertainment has never been more popular—"Baywatch" and MTV penetrate the most distant corners of the globe. But while the United States may reign as the world's dominant economic, military and cultural force, its power still has limits. As the world's largest debtor, Washington owes the rest of the world more than \$1 trillion—much of it to Japan—and remains vulnerable to the whims of its creditors. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

We apologize for the printing error.

"THANKSGIVING"

at the Hard Rock Cafe

will be on Thursday, November 27th

NOT

October 28th, 1997

Thank you for bearing with us!



JORDAN

W E E K



An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



Industrial action

There is still no end in sight for the dispute between doctors, dentists and chemists' on one hand and the government, on the other. This week the doctors stepped up their industrial action in public hospitals throughout the Kingdom. Doctors withdrew from work between 9 am and 3 pm on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. The report last week that the dispute had ended after an agreement to increase the incentives of these public health workers by 60 percent proved to be groundless. Minister of Health Ashraf Al Kurdi said that he wouldn't agree to pay incentives of 60 percent, offering only half of that. This created much animosity, with accusations and counter accusations occurring on both sides. The Health Minister described the doctors' action as irresponsible and said that he would hold them accountable for any loss of life. For their part the leaders of the doctors, dentists and pharmacists associations lashed out at the Health Minister and said it was he who broke the gentlemen's agreement reached last week. Further, they pointed out that they are not in the business of causing loss of life, and that emergency services are operating normally.

Murder solved after 11 years

The police in Amman have solved a murder that was committed 11 years ago. One day in June 1986 the police was notified that a body belonging to a young man was found dead on the Yajouz road on the way to Zerga. The man was shot in the head. Through his identity card the police were able to find out his name and his age. The murder was left unsolved till lately when his file was opened again by a special team of police officers. After much investigation, suspicions focused on a man who was taken into custody and later confessed to the murder. He said that he first met the victim in one of the public places in Amman. After they talked for sometime, they both went in his car to the Yajouz area after buying alcoholic drinks. Having finished their drinks the man took out the gun and shot the youth by mistake.

We want our jobs back!

About 23 teachers from government schools across the Kingdom were sacked from their jobs by the Civil Service Commission (CSC). Commission officials said that they later found that the teachers were wrongly appointed. The teachers held a sit-in outside the headquarters of the CSC and have taken their case to His Majesty King Hussein. During the sit-in, the Secretary-General of the Commission came out and told them that their appointments were wrongly made and that they must wait their turn on the commission's list. However, he did promise them that he would take up their cases with the Ministry of Education. But apparently this was not a satisfactory answer, for as soon as the sit-in was over, the 23 teachers went to the Lawyers Association to see whether an attorney can be appointed to represent them. The teachers want to take their case to the High Court.

Workshop focuses on women and the media



By Star Staff Writer

THE ROLE of women in society and means to enhance their role were the focus of a workshop organized by the Horizon Cultural Center in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The two-day workshop, held in Taybet Zaman concentrated on the ways women are stereotyped in the media and means to correct it.

Participants including journalists, sociologists, and women activists discussed working papers on topics related to women in society and they stressed the need to change some worn-out concepts that distort the image of women.

Working papers were presented by Manal Al Sharif, director of Horizon Center, Mr. Olaf Konrad, representative of Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Dr. Nabil Al Sharif from Al Dustour daily and Dr. Hind Al Dastour from the University of Jordan. Dr. Hilmi Sari, Dr. Khadeejah Habashneh and Dr. Mousa Shetwi besides Lebanese researcher, Dr. Aneesa Al Amin, member of the Lebanese Women Research Forum and Lawyer Basma Ensour.

All participants stressed that the society should back women to contribute in creativity and

productivity. However, some pointed out that there are wrong concepts and legislations that should be removed, and describing them as barriers that hinder half of the society from performing its task effectively.

Criticism was posed at some media institutions which treat women in a narrow-minded way, restricting their role to health, education and social fields while ignoring the need to foster a new opinion and give women a more active role on the political arena and other professions.

Women should be given a helping hand to make a more effective position in the decision making process. Such target could not materialize unless it receives serious concern from various mediums including TV, radio and press.

The workshop emphasized that women should also be given their full rights and treated on the basis of justice and equality with men.

Such a positive role performed by the media could be a means to remove discrimination in society between men and women.

The participants concluded that the media did not provide enough backing to women's issues and reiterated that it must have a more active role in supporting women's causes.



Two voters cast their ballots in Tuesday's poll in Amman (photos by Yannick Lainé and Mahmoud Shawkat)

King Hussein says Netanyahu betrayed trust

By John Lancaster

AMMAN—His Majesty King Hussein infuriated by the recent Israeli attempt to kill a political leader of the militant Islamic group Hamas here, says that his trust in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has all but evaporated and that only a much more vigorous diplomatic effort by the United States can prevent the collapse of Arab-Israeli peace negotiations.

In an interview last Thursday, the Jordanian monarch accused Netanyahu of repeatedly betraying him, most recently and most audaciously by dispatching Mossad secret service assassins on a botched mission to poison a Hamas politburo member, Khaled Meshal, in Amman in September.

King Hussein also faulted the United States for the deteri-

oration in Arab-Israeli relations, urging Washington to play a much more active role in pressing Israel to abandon policies—such as building settlements in the West Bank—that he says are pushing the region toward an "explosion."

"The United States, with its tremendous influence and impact on this area and all the people of the region, and its position in the world, should move from being a messenger to being actively involved," King Hussein said in the interview at Basman Palace. "It just cannot carry on continuing to deliver messages from one side to another."

The comments by King Hussein, one of Washington's closest Arab allies, constitute a challenge to Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, who said during a tour of the region in September that she will not return until Israel and the Palestinians demonstrate a greater commitment to peace. They also reflect his sense of betrayal: Alone among Arab leaders, and despite intense political opposition at home, King Hussein has pursued normal, friendly relations with Israel, with which Jordan made peace in 1994.

In somber and at times despairing tones, King Hussein, 61, said he has virtually run out of ideas on how to deal with the right-wing Israeli leader. He accused Netanyahu of repeatedly breaching commitments to his Arab negotiating partners and pandering to extremist elements in Israel's body politic. Far from enhancing Israel's security, he said,

such tactics are fanning the flames of Arab radicalism and could lead to a new "balance of fear" between Israel and hostile neighbors armed with weapons of mass destruction.

"It was an act against Jordan itself, its integrity and its sovereignty, and the results were devastating to the trust we had built so far," Hussein said of the 25 September assassination attempt on Misha'i, a Jordanian citizen.

His Majesty cautioned that he is not abandoning Jordan's policy of "normalization" with Israel. The two countries are continuing discussions on issues such as water rights, tourism and trade. The kingdom of nearly 4.5 million people, less than half of them Palestinian, is one of the few Arab states that has committed publicly to sending delegates to a US-sponsored economic conference in the Arabian Gulf state of Qatar next month. Israel also will attend.

"If we cannot in certain areas see any real tangible progress it doesn't mean that we close the doors and go back to square one," he said.

But King Hussein also made clear that he is increasingly

inclined to draw a distinction between Netanyahu and the Israeli people, a majority of whom he says he still believes are committed to making peace with the Arabs. "It is a very fair distinction, and it's a very serious distinction in my mind," His Majesty said.

King Hussein confirmed, reports that only two days before the attempt on Misha'i's life, he had relayed a message to Israel on behalf of Hamas leaders broaching the possibility of a 10-year moratorium on violence. Netanyahu has defended the attack on Misha'i on grounds that Hamas was behind recent suicide bombings in Jerusalem.

Hussein said the episode has left him at a loss about how to proceed in his relationship with Netanyahu.

"In the past I had a partner," he said in reference to Rabin, who was assassinated two years ago and with whom he was particularly close. "But now I don't know, I really don't know where we are."

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Polling booth

Bad day for women candidates

It was a bad day for women candidates in this election. Although 17 women candidates contested the race, the highest number in Jordan's political history, not one managed to clinch a seat in the 13th Parliament. Despite the heated preparations and the high expectations, women candidates will have to wait for another four years before making a new bid. Even worse, the first and only female deputy, Toujan Faisal, lost her seat in the Third District. She got 4227 votes, but her rival for the Circassian/Chechen seat, Nayef Mulla, snatched the seat with 5196 votes. Emile Naffa, another woman candidate standing for the Third District's Christian seat, got a respectable 2792 ballots, but lost to Khalil Haddadin. She was fighting on a Jordanian Communist Party ticket. What is interesting is the case of Issa Mdanat, who got slightly more than 300 votes. This is seen by political analysts as an abysmal result for a veteran politician who fought and won the 1989 elections, but failed in the 1993 elections.

Facts and figures

At last the government appeared to have saved the day. Its appointment of an official election spokesman may have turned the tide around for an elections' campaign that was at first beset by confusions about recurring voting cards and other irregularities. Dr. Mazen Al Armouti was brought in at the last minute just before he was to take up his new post as Jordan's ambassador to Vienna. Few days before the poll, he announced that the government had struck out 120,000 names from the voter rosters. He added that these include people whose names appeared more than once, those who have long passed away and members of the armed forces who are not allowed to vote anyway. About 1.4 million received their voter cards, out of 1.8 million who registered, while over 800,000 actually voted for the 524 candidates who took part in the elections.

Dr. Armouti suggested that there are 32 Islamists who are running as independents, 17 leftists and nationalists, and the rest are candidates from the center-right and middle of the road parties.

In a later press conference, Dr. Armouti rejected out of hand the accusation from members of the opposition that the American Embassy in Amman and its staff were intervening in the election process. He added that the opposition movement has no right to call for international observers to monitor the elections since they have decided to boycott the elections.

skirmish at the Valley

The pre-election campaign was lukewarm, according to observers. But in Dir Alla in the Jordan Valley, a rally held for one of the candidates turned into a near riot as stones were thrown at supporters of one of the competing candidates. Three people had to be taken to the medical center. Eye witness reports say that car windows were smashed, and a full scale riot was only prevented by the intervention of local leaders who cooled down tempers.

JTV's virtual reality elections

Nevermind that the 1997 polls were tribal elections for the most part. For Jordan Television, it was hi-tech all the way. The state-run institution employed some of the most advanced gimmicks of the information revolution to bring live coverage of the elections from north to south. JTV presented viewers, in Jordan and the rest of the world through its satellite channel, state-of-the-art graphics through its newly acquired virtual reality studio. The studio, which is the first of its kind in the Arab world, uses sophisticated hardware and software to bring real-life graphical presentations. The half million dollar studio will be used in the future for special news and entertainment programs.

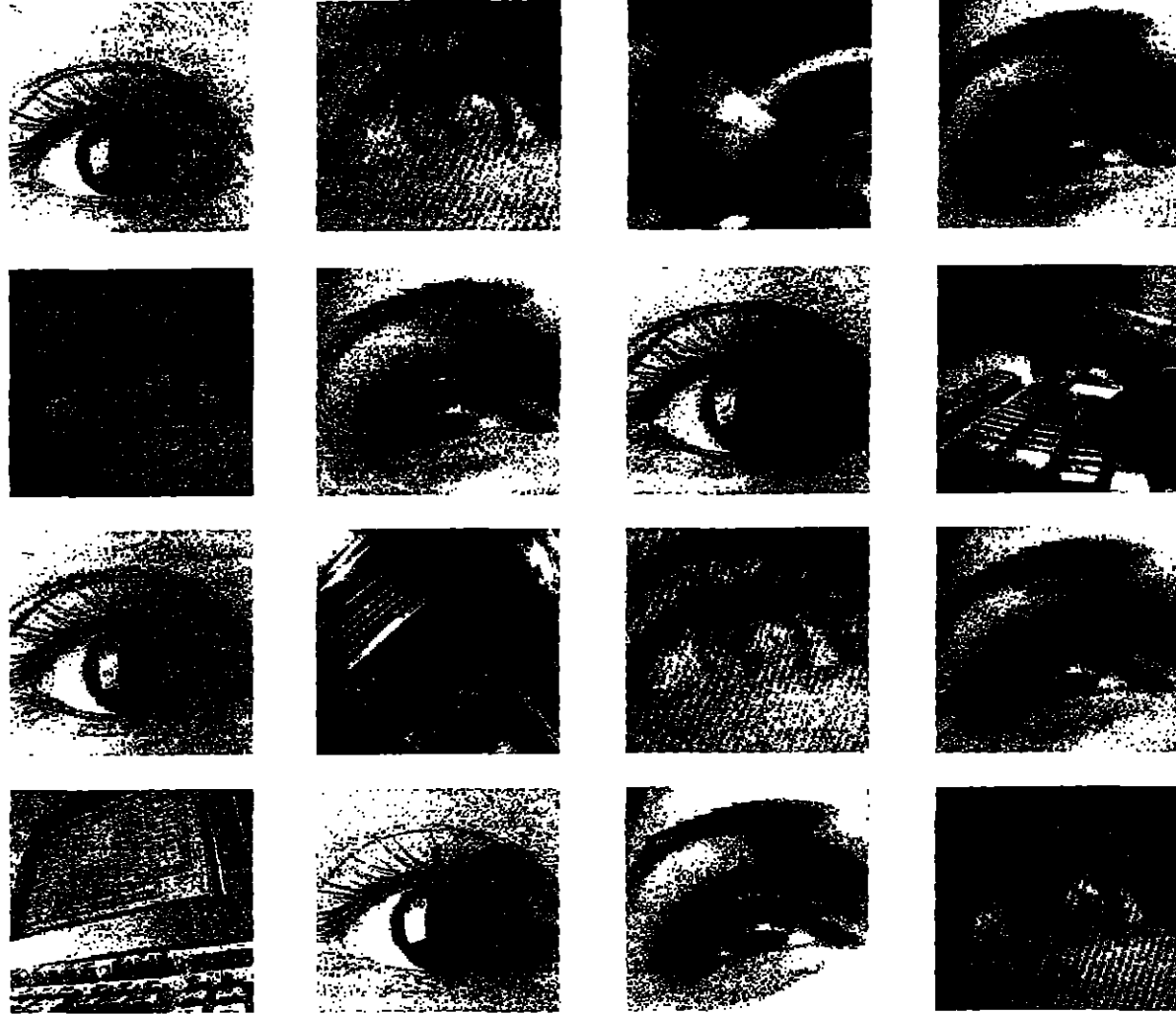
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Our Say...

Tough tasks for the 13th Parliament

JORDANIAN HAVE elected their representatives to the 13th Parliament in elections characterized by a relatively low voter turnout and boycott from opposition political parties. Still, there is a consensus that the government was able to conduct Tuesday's elections fairly and freely.

But the coming Parliament will have the added burden of fighting for its credibility in a changing domestic political landscape and mounting internal and external challenges. It will always fend allegations, mainly from the opposition, that it came to power when Jordanian democracy was on the defensive as a result of recent amendments to the press law and a general feeling that much of the achievements of the past seven years was coming under official review.

The new Parliament will lead Jordan into the 21st Century. But will it be able to do that? It will be a legislature that will have the tough task of dispensing with government's policies by approving or rejecting the amended press law and by passing a modern electoral law that will take into consideration the shortcomings in the present legislation. But most importantly it will be the organ responsible for preserving the integrity of Jordan's democratic process and the country's aspirations for a better future.

But the question that political observers, as well as ordinary Jordanians, will be asking themselves is this: Has the opposition, particularly the Islamists, gained or lost from their decision to turn their backs on the November elections?

This is a question that both the government and the opposition will have to look into if they are to re-steer Jordanian democracy into a path that will prepare it to face the challenges of the future. If a meaningful debate between the two sides had failed to bear fruits before the elections for fear that either side would have to make concessions, now is the time to re-engage in a serious debate. The opposition's threat to launch a national congress to address the nation's problems will only divide the country and drive each side into the corner.

On the other hand, it will be a mistake to ignore the lessons of this week's elections and pretend that the political path is widely open and clear from obstacles. The government will have to take into consideration the new realities brought about by the recent elections.

Jordanians from across the political spectrum, and whether they voted or not, have sent a message to the political establishment of the country. That establishment constitutes the government, political parties and independent figures as well. That message must mean something to all. The challenge is to read it well and make the sober and responsible decisions to act in response to it.

Meanwhile, we have an elected Lower House which represents the people of Jordan. The members will have to rise to their responsibilities as the nation's deputies. We hope they too will read the people's message. ■



Jihad Al Islami activist burns the American flag in Hebron, Monday. Hundreds of people took part in a symbolic funeral signalling the death of the peace process which has long been stalled. Eye witnesses said that the activists were members of Al Jihad Al Islami, who shouted "death to America" and death to Israel.

The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

An independent political, economic and cultural weekly, published every Thursday in Amman by Media Services International (Info-Media).

Editorial & Advertising: Telephone 652-380, 645-380, Fax 648-298.

P.O. Box 9313, Postal Code 11191 Amman - Jordan. email: Star@arabia.com

URL: <http://www.arabia.com/star>

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The Star is serviced by LA Times-Washington Post News Service, Cartoonists International

(Lurie cartoons), PANOS, The WorldPaper, Editors Press Service, STILLS and by

correspondents in the United States and South Asia.

Member of The International Advertising Association

Subscriptions: (annual) Jordan JD 20, Arab countries US\$ 100, W. Europe US\$ 200,

USA & Canada US\$ 200.

Letters to the editor: Will be edited for brevity, must contain name and address of sender.

Notes from the Levant

Putting Jordan's democracy on the stand

By Osama El-Sherif

THE 4TH of November was a wet and cold day in Jordan: not unusual for this time of the year. For the 524 candidates contesting the 80-seat Lower House of the Jordanian Parliament, the winter storm added to worries of a low turnout of the over 1.4 million registered voters.

This was a public holiday, a day the government dubbed as "a democratic wedding," but for the political opposition and their supporters, who have boycotted the polls, the elections, the first to be held after Jordan signed its peace treaty with Israel, were anything but a cause for celebration.

But in spite of the low turnout, about 54% of voters, these were crucial ballots. Unlike the previous elections of 1989 and 1993, this year's polls lacked a central popular issue such as political and economic reforms or peace with Israel. Between the opposition's boycott, in protest of the gradual erosion of Parliament's power over the past years, and government's insistence to go ahead, the elections themselves became the issue. As such, the government had put the future of Jordanian democracy on the stand. People's vote, or lack of it, would become a sort of referendum on the seven-year-old democratic process in Jordan.

In a way, those who did not vote, mostly in the capital and other urban areas, had helped the candidates of those who exercised their right and voted.

The elections took place after a tumultuous 12 months that began with the lifting of broad

subsidies last year—leading to major riots in the south—and culminating with the controversial amendments to the press and publication law in May of this year, which curtailed press freedom. In between, people's frustration grew with the lack of progress on the political front, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track of negotiations and Israel's breach of the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty by sanctioning the assassination attempt on Hamas political leader, Khaled Misha'1, in Amman more than a month ago.

The showdown between the government and the opposition parties, which began after the Islamists announced their boycott decision, has cast its shadow over this year's elections. The government has put the credibility of the polls at risk with recent revelations of election-related irregularities such as inaccurate voter registration rosters and faulty card distribution process. Only in the few days preceding the elections did the government take some positive measures to salvage the situation. After insisting at first that it will not invite independent monitors, a hastily-appointed official spokesman announced this week that the government had nothing to

hide and that any observer would be welcomed.

But an election without the participation of political parties and prominent political figures, cannot claim to be fully pluralistic. And with international pressure over regressions in press freedom and other public liberties, added to the heavy tribal influence marking this year's ballot, after years of democratic reforms aimed at institutionalizing a civil society, the 1997 elections cannot claim to represent the apex in the democratic transition in Jordan.

Regardless of the Islamist boycott, the low turnout at the polls sends a strong message to the political establishment in the country. At the heart of people's apathy is the general frustration with the political and economic conditions in the

country. Two previous parliaments have failed to transform the country's economic fortunes. But most of all there is a general consensus that Jordan's "warm" peace with Israel has failed to produce tangible benefits although it carried a high price tag.

By putting the future of the democratic process on the stand at this sensitive juncture in the life of Jordanians, the government has placed all its chips on the table. It is difficult to see how the new Lower House will affect the life of Jordanians in the coming phase. With Jordanian-Israeli relations at their lowest ebb, the US support of the peace process crumbling, and the specter of yet another confrontation between the US and Iraq re-emerging, the political horizon looks, once again, uncertain. ■

'S' for stalemate, 'S' for statehood

By Daoud Kuttab

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM—Both the time and conditions are ripe for the United States to publicly support Palestinian statehood as the end result of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

For months the peace process in the Middle East has been bogged down without any substantial progress due to the Israeli government's intransigence.

While Palestinians have consistently and stubbornly been aspiring for (and even dying for) an independent Palestinian state, the Netanyahu government has vehemently opposed it without offering any alternative.

Without agreement even in general terms about the future status of the Palestinian territories, implementing the interim phase of the Oslo peace accords becomes impossible. Every aspect of the interim phase is seen by the current Israeli government as possibly leading to Palestinian statehood.

Palestinian negotiators say that Israel has failed to fulfill 32 specific commitments made in the Oslo agreement. Among them are redeployments of Israeli military personnel, opening a safe passage between the West Bank and Gaza, releasing prisoners, repealing military law and opening the airport and port.

US policy has failed miserably to produce real progress. When Dennis Ross, comes to the area, the Israelis listen to what he says and then do the opposite, abusing their tremendous military and political advantage over the Palestinians.

It is unrealistic, if not naive, for the United States to expect the conflicting parties to change their ideological positions and produce a peace agreement among themselves. This will not happen while one party—namely Israel—is so well supported and endowed by the United States. A new policy is necessary if the United States intends to act as an honest broker.

The United States must do more than just take notes when both parties meet, but must introduce bold and courageous ideas that will break the jam.

The United States would be speaking in harmony with its own history and values if it declared public support for the Palestinian people's right to determine their own future, including the right to live in an independent state. Officially, the United States supports the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, but fails to articulate

the "S" word, "statehood."

Today, a *de facto* Palestinian state already exists. Palestinians carry passports that are recognized by most countries of the world, including the United States and Israel; an 88-member legislative council has been elected; Palestinians have police, postage stamps and a national Olympic team. The world's most powerful country should take the negotiators out of their misery by supporting Palestinian statehood, turning a point of stalemate into a bridge toward Palestinian sovereignty and national independence.

A public declaration by President Clinton or Secretary of State Madeleine Albright would send a powerful message to all parties concerned about the level of US commitment to a genuine and lasting peace in the Middle East.

It would tell the Israelis that their procrastination in the peace talks will not make the desire of the Palestinians to live in a free and independent state vanish. It would force the Israeli settlers to realize that if they want to live in peace in our

country, they have to accept Palestinian sovereignty. The United States needs to let Israel know that lust for land and convoluted attempts to connect settlements to one another and to Israel by building bypass roads will not be tolerated.

A US declaration could help Palestinians in many other ways. It could generate new investment and give hope to a disillusioned people who have seen their land robbed, their homes demolished and their economy devastated.

Were Palestinians to have the confidence of knowing that the peace talks would result in the Palestinian state they so desire, they could turn concerns and discussions to serious debate about developing democratic laws and creating a constitution that would protect individual rights.

This summer when Islamic extremists carried out suicide bombings in a crowded street in Jerusalem, 2 million innocent Palestinians were punished en masse by the Israeli government, which imposed travel restrictions and withheld money due the Palestinian Authority.

Commerce as well as normal social interaction and medical care came to a halt as Palestinians were not only forbidden access to Israel, but were also prevented from traveling to and from nearby Arab countries. When the movement of food, fuel and goods was barred, economic havoc resulted, making an already disillusioned people even more frustrated.

What is needed today more than ever is a signal from the United States of its genuine support for a lasting just peace in the Middle East. Otherwise, Israel and the Occupied Territories face continued chaos with more people dying and the cycle of violence and hatred reaching new heights, all of it playing into the hands of Islamic militants who want an Islamic state rather than the secular democratic state that the majority of Palestinians want. ■

Kuttab is the director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al Quds University in Jerusalem. LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Letters to the Editor

Stimulating article

To The editor,

I really enjoyed reading the opinion piece on Riyadh Al Rayess, (The Star 30 October). It was intellectually stimulating and inspiring. We seem to have let our intellectual "revolutionary" spirit subside into the doldrums here in the Arab world. Thanks for reminding us that there are people who still strive for a better Arab world.

We are daily surprised in the Middle East with politics and news.

Culture seldom has any mention in the writings of our journalists and columnists, well, except as an object of either derision or worship.

Thanks for the inspiration!

Haitam Ibrahim,

haitam@arabia.com

The lure of coffee

To The editor,

I just read your article "Jordanians Black Lure" (The Star 25 September) and I found it

very entertaining. Here in the United States, we also are lured by the black liquid.

It is so interesting that yet we live an ocean away, we are all still connected by our roots. The coffee has always been a symbol of the social graces in our part of the world. It is also not considered polite to refuse a cup of coffee.

I think it is wonderful that the Jordanian's traditions in the United States have not vanished on this side of the world. I guess as long as there are Jordanians in the United States, there will always be the lure, no matter how long you have been away from your roots. I think it is in our blood.

Huwaida Mousa

Weedda@aol.com

Terrorist goes home

To The editor,

The Arab-Americans in Baltimore are protesting the return of Alan Goodman, the Jewish American terrorist who was involved in a shooting spree at Al-Aqsa mosque in 1982 was recently pardoned by Israel and has reportedly entered the United States and is living in Baltimore near Washington DC.

I found myself forced to disagree with my countrymen on this issue. Ian Goodman is an American terrorist, he has the right to return to the United States.

He should be arrested and tried in the US as a cold blooded murderer.

He does not belong in Palestine, neither those Zionists and Jews who immigrated illegally and took our homes and land by force. If they want peace and security then they will find it in the country of their origin.

Ibrahim Ebeid,

ebaid123@bellatlantic.net.

Keep up the good work!

To The editor,

I would like to congratulate you on behalf of myself and all the Arab community that reads The Star in the US. Your newspaper is informative and educational and it reflects the reality of Jordan. It would be nice if your newspaper would cover more international stories. I always look forward to reading The Star, keep up the good work!

Fatimeh El-Sherif,

El-Sherif@worldnet.att.net

Middle East Beat

Jack in the box

IT IS usually around October that invariable trouble begins to simmer.

It seems that October is linked to the actions of President Saddam Hussein as it is his birthday in that month. Up till now, such crisis in Iraq-UN relations have usually been sorted out with some acceptable backing from one party, or even both.

One cannot say that it has always been amicable, but was within the rules of American dual containment, and Iraqi self-preservation. The tempo gets changed, and the birthday festivities usually bring out victors on all sides. Until recently, it has been reasonable to assume, that nothing much happens with this habitual confrontation, apart from putting armies in the region, in a state of alert, which, incidentally, may test their preparedness.

However, it is likely that some disagreeable incidents may take place this time, for the grounds are fertile for adventure, some, and the status quo of the Iraqi situation may not be anymore "the best of all evils." One does not hope for an escalation in pronouncements or otherwise, but a political reading of the map, accompanied with military and political developments, indicate great concern for all in the area.

It has been suggested that President Saddam Hussein is playing on the differences within the UN. For the cracks that have emerged in the western perception regarding the sanctions against Iraq, and emanating perhaps from a mixture of humanitarian and commercial interests, seem to be a tempting target to concentrate on. This is in order to continue driving a wedge between the varying interests.

However, the situation is not that simple. There is usually an implicit consensus between all the powers, when the level of confrontation between Iraq and the UN is heightened. The French and the Russians are advising President Saddam not to insist on banning American inspectors from carrying out their duties.

Perhaps after many attempts, the Iraqi regime may be able to drive a wedge at one point in history, but that is not dependent on Iraq-UN relations alone, for on the ground, the issues are getting dangerous. The Gulf states are arming themselves at an alarming rate, with the possibility of using these in one, or more neighborhood conflicts.

The Kurdish groups inside Iraq seem to have sensed that, some advantages are likely to come their way soon, so they are not hesitating in taking up arms against each other to affirm supremacy of one group over the rest.

The PKK activities are at the lowest ebb under the circumstances of Turkish military operations, and by the presence of the Turkish army in an area 30 kilometers inside Iraq. Iranian fighter jets have taken to violating Iraqi air space at will, prompting the US to send one of its carriers at high speed to the area. All those show a bleak prospect for what awaits Iraq, and it is very clear that the reluctance in altering the status quo, may not be there anymore.

It is apparent that groups within Iraq, are acting as if the country is already dismembered, its influential neighbors seem to act as if it does not exist at all. So between both actions and indications, one can only expect grave consequences for the sovereignty and unity of the Iraq. Whether, president Saddam had read the UN map correctly or not, is not the real danger, the real danger is not to provide an excuse for the creation of a situation, in which what is being carried out either implicitly, or explicitly, with the justification. ■

Tiddle
1st Beat
by
Airi Janbek
ack in
he box

Business scene

■ The economy has recorded a positive growth this year of 5.4 percent, according to minister of finance Sulaiman Hafez. This growth ratio is expected to rise next year to 6 percent, he added. Mr Hafez stated that the Jordanian government is currently conducting bilateral agreements with the donor countries. Paris Club after getting the approval to schedule a \$450 million external debt. These agreements are expected to be finalized by next March. Some of those debts will be swapped into investments in the Kingdom, he continued. Available statistics estimate Jordan's indebtedness at \$6 billion.

■ The Jordan Investment and Finance Bank is to raise its capital to JD 20 million, through capitalization of JD 5 million from its reserve and turn-over profits. Five million shares are offered for private subscription to shareholders at a nominal value of one dinar each. Bank's chairman, Nizar Jaraneh said that the Bank has generated net operational profits of JD 2.9 million. Such a figure, according to Jaraneh is expected to increase by the end of this year to hit the JD 4 million mark.

■ The Gracia Insurance Co was lately declared as a capital of JD 2 million. Its authorized capital is JD 4 million. The company runs all types of insurance. Gulf and American investors contribute by JD 150,000 of its capital, representing 7.5 percent. So the insurance sector has now a new comer. This may give the newly established concern a push to do its utmost to provide high quality insurance service.

■ The second batch of returnees' compensations has already been remitted to local Jordanian banks, and 19,000 expatriates are waiting to get their due payments soon. The total value of this batch which is \$60 million has been deposited into five local banks, including more than JD 20 million in the Housing Bank, JD 10 million in the Jordan National Bank, JD 5 million in the Arab Land Bank and JD 5 million in the Jordan-Kuwait Bank. The Housing Bank has got the lion share from this batch because it has many branches spread all over the Kingdom, according to a well-informed source in the Bank.

Foreign Exchange
Wednesday, 5 November

	Buy JD	Sell JD
US\$	0.7080	0.7100
£	1.1510	1.1568
DM	0.4124	0.4145
SFr	0.4801	0.4825
FFr	0.1227	0.1233
YEN (100)	0.5624	0.5652
DEL	0.3667	0.3685
LIT (100)	0.0419	0.0421

Open air and privatization highlight future of air transport industry

AMMAN (Star)—The air transport industry has over the last two decades, seen a series of substantial changes targeted at liberalizing aviation services worldwide. Such changes have created a new concept for liberalization and privatization, which are considered as the key elements towards the free market economy. Referring to such concept, Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein said, at the opening session of the 53rd annual meeting of IATA International Air Transport Association at Radisson SAS Hotel (formerly Philadelphia Hotel) that this has simplified required measures to enter in the new market economy and paved the way for new allies and blocks to come to the surface in addition to introducing merger programs and plans needed for such economy. The conference which was held in the Middle East for the first time, has chosen Amman as its headquarters for special reasons linked to peace, hospitality and stability that distinguishes Jordan. Prince Faisal addressed the participants saying that the United States was the pioneer in removing restrictions imposed on the country. Europe later cashing on the experience later followed suit. It first liberalized air transport on the continent and then going for a completely open market. Prince Faisal stressed that the new trend to liberalize the aviation industry implies that it is imperative for airline agents

to respond to these changes. Already, some of those agents have adopted restructuring plans hoping to improve their competitiveness potential, together with enhancing their performance and productivity. Nowadays, governments all over the world have realized that it is impossible for them to continue to protect their national airlines and make them strong enough to cope with their counterpart agents that are run on purely commercial basis. However, Prince Faisal pointed out that those small and medium-size national agents are expected to be mainly affected by the new trends, fearing that they won't be able to operate without the umbrella of subsidy and protection from their governments. Also, they suffer from accumulated losses that could not be settled without the intervention of the governments. Thus, such companies feel unable to renew their fleets or provide at least finance for modernization and development projects. Prince Faisal, stressed that these companies have to opt either to enter into mergers and



allies to get as much privileges as possible, or to limit their operations to operate carriers providing their services for certain lines or routes. However, the formation of these allies in the air transport industry should be built on positive attitudes and transparency. The chairman of the IATA conference, and the Royal Jordanian executive director, Nadir Al Thahabi told the conference that RJ is steadily moving towards privatization. He clarified that such a strategy plus globalization are the major factors that highlight the policies of international airlines. This venue, according to Al Thahabi, convenes at the time when most operating global air-

lines have last year carried 1185 million passengers, among them 380 million via international routes while more than 804 million were carried through local flights. Mr Jeannot said. Air freight size during the same year, he added, recorded a 4.6 percent to reach in 1996, 24 million tons. He expected that the passengers' movement to grow by 6.6 percent. The biggest growth ratio, as Mr Jeannot suggested will be on Asian airlines, followed by Latin America airlines, Africa, Europe, North America and the Middle East. Mr Jeannot pointed out that the air transport industry faces some challenges such as additional taxes, that may negatively leave their impact on such domain. IATA is giving much concern to security-strategic objectives related mainly to safety and security precautions, and hope through cooperation among its members to reduce aviation costs to half by the year 2005. He referred to the need to speed up the readjustment program of the Royal Jordanian which helps the airline to perform on the basis of more flexibility and efficiency in securing its service for the public. The participants of the IATA conference included 700 senior officials representing 182 Arab and international airlines, 33 manufacturing companies and 18 companies specialized in express air freight services.

Cairo bourse speaks wonders of history

By Samir Raafat
Star Cairo correspondent

DURING ONE of the informal turn of the century meetings at the 'Cafe New Bar', Cairo's merchants and brokers were reminded once more by their leader, Monsieur Moise Cattani, that it was high noon for Cairo to follow Alexandria's example and have its own Bourse. With the number of limited liability companies reaching 79 at an aggregate capital of 29 million pounds, the city's sidewalks could no longer conduct pork barrel politics on Cairo's sidewalks or inside coffee shops and hotels. And so it was, when in May 1903, an ad hoc site committee chose the old premises of the Ottoman Bank (today Groppi Adly Branch) on Maghraby Street as the elected official headquarters of the newly incorporated Bourse and Banking Company of Egypt Limited. With ambitious plans in mind, the new company leased the premises for a non-renewable period of six years at an annual rent of 400 pounds. In the meantime, an international competition was initiated for the design of a dedicated Bourse to be situated at the center of Cairo's European district of Ismailia, not far from the National Bank of Egypt (today Central Bank). The prize for best design went in April 1907 to the French award-winning architect Raoul Brandon. The timing couldn't have been better, or so everyone thought. Emboldened by success and drunk on growth, the promoters of the Cairo Bourse were in an excessive mood.

It was public knowledge that lumped together, the Cairo and Alexandria Bourses rated among the world's top five Stock Exchanges. Egypt's economy was at an all-time high and the number of companies traded in the Cairo Bourse alone had reached 238 with a combined capital of 91 Egyptian million pounds. Seventy-three brokers and intermediaries were on hand to take care of the spiraling share trading. The modest premises on Maghraby Street had most certainly outlived its usefulness. It was time for swank. But like the swing of a pendulum, the high state of euphoria disappeared overnight. Prudence having given way to high-risk speculation, what had started with a real estate boom in Egypt, ended in what became known in the annals of speculative history as the Crash of 1907. Some historians concede that the money panic of 1907 started in Alexandria, Egypt, with the failure in July of a large bank of Cassa di Sconto. Japan was hit next, then Germany, then Chile. By October, the fallout reached Europe and the United States. In Egypt, the over-tended banks folded up one after the other. As share prices plummeted, soon enough, a by now jobless broker, Mr Alfred Nahman, was appointed chief liquidator of the Bourse and Banking Company of Egypt Limited. It would be 18 months after Brandon's publicized award to build the Bourse that never was, that the Corporation of Agents de Change commissioned the Cairo firm of Edward Matasek and Maurice J. Cattani—with the participation of Ernest Jaspas—to

design and erect an Exchange Building. Adorned with Matasek's trademark accoutrements of Hermetian Masonic busts and ornate stucco, the resultant edifice was the handsomest building on the block. At long last Cairo had a real trading floor, surrounded by a high gallery from where share trading could be observed by the concerned public. The building, which stands opposite the French consulate, is still there today, having been occupied in turn by Lloyds Bank, the British Chamber of Commerce, the National Bank of Egypt and now by the Watany Development Bank. Trading had hardly started on Sharia Al Borsa Al Gedida or New Bourse Street when, on 30 April, 1909, the New Bourse was suspended part of the day once it was announced that Egypt's leading laissez-faire banker-industrialist, Raphael Suares, had died. It was largely thanks to his efforts that Cairo had had a bourse in the first place. In view of his untimely death, Suares missed by a few months, the imposition of the first ever bourse regulations. It was in 1928, a year before the Wall Street crash, that the Cairo Bourse moved into its present premises on Cherifin Street. The art nouveau building with its multiple neo-Doric colonnades was designed by French architect George Parcy. He was responsible for much of Cairo's elegant interwar buildings including Sednaoui's department store on Midan Khazindar. Serendipity or not, the site on which Sednaoui was built had once been the first meeting place for Cairo's speculative traders prior to the formation of Cairo's first bourse. Since he had already died in 1924, Monsieur Moise Cattani, the original promoter of the Cairo Bourse had no way of knowing that four years after his departure, the bourse would relocate on part of what had once been his Cairo palace. In its heyday, Palais Cattani extended from the National Bank of Egypt all the way to Midan Soliman Pasha (now Talat Harb). As though a reminder for his capital efforts,

the Cairo Bourse is to this day flanked by two side streets, one of them named after Moussa Cattani Pasha. Before it folded up in July 1961 following the state-sanctioned demise of Egypt's private sector, the Cairo and Alexandria Bourses (they had already merged) was listed fourth in the world. Almost thirty-six years later, in a new era of economic re-structuring, it is now up to the Tigers on the Nile to restore the Cairo Bourse to its former ranking.

ing problems could spill over into the US economy by harming the countries' ability to buy American products. If banks fail, money owed to Americans might not be repaid. Richard C. Koo, an economist with Nomura Research Institute in Tokyo, worries that big Japanese banks will find themselves seriously short of capital when they balance their books in March, at the end of their fiscal year. That's because much of their capital is in Japanese stock that lately has been declining fast in value. If even a few of the banks run out of money, "you enter that kind of dangerous water," Koo said. "There is this chain reaction that people worry about, and then the problem could spread to the entire (Japanese) banking system." The region's biggest question mark is China, said one analyst. A large portion of the loans made by Chinese banks are considered to be bad at a time when major Chinese cities are experiencing some of the region's worst property slumps. Vacancy rates were 24.5 percent in Shanghai and 22.9 percent in Beijing in March, compared with 13.9 percent for Bangkok, according to the International Monetary Fund. The rates may be higher today. Some analysts are reserving judgment on specific issues. Ernest Napier, Asia banking analyst for the rating agency Standard & Poor's Corp., said Thursday that the firm felt no need to adjust its ratings for any of five Hong Kong banks it follows. "It is too early to say how bad the stock market decline will hurt the local economy and therefore the banks," he said. Clinton administration officials have said privately that they are monitoring financial developments in Asia very carefully. They view strength-

Stock plunge adds to Asia's banking woes

By Sandra Sugawara

TOKYO—The sharp fall in Asian financial markets this month has created new concerns about the stability of the region's banks. Many economists say massive government intervention might be needed to make the banks financially fit and able to aid the region's recovery. New signs of a potential banking crunch came Thursday, as Moody's Investors Service downgraded its rating of Hong Kong banks, noting currency pressures and their big collection of potentially risky real estate loans. Analysts attributed the Hong Kong stock market's plunge of almost 4 percent to that report. Economists here generally don't foresee a wave of disastrous defaults, because Asian governments historically have preferred to prop up sick banks. Indefinitely rather than shut them down and take the pain all at once. Instead, the fear is that many banks will be neither dead nor fully alive, a drag on their economies, unable to lend the money that will be needed to get the region moving again. "What is clear is that all over Asia, the great boom of the '90s is stalled and banks often are left holding the bag. Bad loans for half-empty skyscrapers are a particular problem. It turns out the real threat to Southeast Asia was not communism but real estate developers," joked Robert G. Zielfinski, Singapore-based head of Asian banking research for Jardine Fleming Securities. As markets have fallen in one capital after another, "we have seen one country after another fall" in the manner of the "domino theory" of US policymakers during the Vietnam War. If not corrected, Asia's bank-

ing financial systems in the emerging markets of Asia as crucial to economic stability. Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan has expressed similar concern. "The recent experience in Asia underscores the importance of financially sound domestic banking and other associated institutions," he said in testimony Wednesday before Congress's Joint Economic Committee. The towering new office buildings, the superhighways and bridges, the golf courses and factories that stud East Asia have for years been touted as proof of smoothly managed growth. But they are often equally valid symbols of banking systems run amok. Over the years, the banks have funneled billions of dollars to well-connected corporate tycoons, politicians or economic planners. Industry of the hour. The crises sometimes turned out to be deadbeats, the skyscrapers they built lacking in tenants, the favored industries such as consumer electronics, which ultimately made the region collectively, and thus more intensely, vulnerable to any downturn. Banks not only failed to properly evaluate the risk of many loans, they often set aside insufficient money to cover potential defaults. With insiders controlling the banking systems, there was little push for tough regulatory oversight. Disclosure rules were often loose. Many common practices by Asian banks, such as investing in the stock market, are illegal under US law. The system worked smoothly when growth continued. Now, "what we do worry about is the unforeseen surprises," Koo said.

Now comes new pressure, in the form of the financial crisis. Many countries are raising interest rates to try to defend the value of their currencies, but higher interest rates can slow down an economy and push pressured borrowers into default. If the values of the currencies are allowed to fall, it can mean that borrowers have more trouble repaying their foreign currency loans. Weak banks are bad news for any economy. But in Asia the grip of banks is stronger than in the United States, which has better-developed stock markets that companies can tap for capital. In Asia, banks remain the main engine of capital creation, according to Roy Ramos, Hong Kong-based regional

banking analyst for Goldman Sachs. With few alternatives such as bonds or mutual funds, most Asians put their money in banks. Starting in the 1970s, as economy after economy took off, Asian banks were praised for providing "patient money" to companies that were trying to grow. This kind of relationship gave rise to South Korea's chaebol industrial groups, Japan's keiretsu and the massive conglomerates run by tycoons in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. "Relationship" banking enabled quick loan decisions and fast investment action, winning praise from many Western analysts over the years. As long as these nations could build walls around their economies, they could protect their banking cartels. But globalization and the flow of international capital changed the rules. So, too, did the decisions of bureaucrats across the region to funnel money into the same highly cyclical industries—such as consumer electronics—which ultimately made the region collectively, and thus more intensely, vulnerable to any downturn. Banks not only failed to properly evaluate the risk of many loans, they often set aside insufficient money to cover potential defaults. With insiders controlling the banking systems, there was little push for tough regulatory oversight. Disclosure rules were often loose. Many common practices by Asian banks, such as investing in the stock market, are illegal under US law. The system worked smoothly when growth continued. Now, "what we do worry about is the unforeseen surprises," Koo said.

Business Chronicle

Accountants congress stress importance of standardization

IT IS described as a great success by any global standards. Attended by more than 5,000 accountants from the world over, the 15th World Congress of Accountants (held once in every 5 years) ended last week in Paris. The concluding session was addressed by none other than the President of France, Mr Jacques Chirac, who urged accountants to standardize financial reporting and follow international accounting standards. The opening session of the conference was equally eventful: since Mr James Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank, could not address the audience in person, the organizers arranged a tele-conference which Mr Wolfensohn, very eloquently addressed live from Washington. One of the technical sessions, a highly interactive one, was addressed by Mr Talal Abu Ghazaleh, in his capacity as the President of the Arab Society of Certified Accountants. The highly controversial topic which Mr Abu Ghazaleh was asked to speak on was the one he has been fighting for vehemently for years—the international accreditation and recognition of professional qualifications of accountants between various nations of the world. He was appointed Chairman of the Group of Experts at the UNCTAD in Geneva since its inception; this group is striving to develop standards for a global accounting qualifications. Currently, professionally qualified accountants of one country are not allowed to practice in another country unless there is a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) between the two countries. To date, a handful of MRAs have been signed worldwide and that too between the developed countries mutually recognizing qualifications between themselves. Mr Abu Ghazaleh has advocated development of global qualification standards for over a decade through the various positions held by him at international Boards— as member of the Council of the International Federation of Accountants (FAC), as Board Member of the International Accounting Standards Committee (IASC), as Board Member of the International Auditing Practices Committee (IAPC) as Chairman of the United Nations Group of Experts (ISAR) and currently as Chairman of the UNCTAD Group of Experts—and argues that if there are International Accounting Standards and International Auditing Standards then why not Global Standards for benchmarking Accounting Qualifications. The WTO's Working Party on Professional Services (WPPS) recommends Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) as an interim step towards the ultimate goal of a multilateral qualification discipline in compliance with the WTO objectives of liberalizing trade in accounting services and eliminating cross-border barriers which inevitably necessitates global qualification standards. Mr Abu Ghazaleh strongly advocated.



Abu Ghazaleh.

MARKET WATCH 1 - 4 November

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
General Central Storage Jordan Food Industries National Engineering Industry	East Investment Project Arab Food Industry Kawther Investment	International Food Industry Irbid Electricity Kawther Investment	Holiday
3.21 2.63 2.50	4.82 4.85 3.33	5.56 5.14 4.84	
National Cement JIMCO United Cigarettes	National Plastic Chemical Industry Irbid Electricity	Mayek Dies and Moulds International Oil Industry Al Ra'i	Holiday
5.00 4.76 3.97	5.41 5.00 4.89	4.88 3.28 2.77	
170.760	170.670	170.770	
General Price Pointer	83652	778413	1890391
Trade Volume	365195	433158	676155
Stock Volume			
Highest Traded Stocks			
Housing Bank	28673	Tourism Hotels	217516
		Arab Bank	309385

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949



JRD holds Fall exhibition

HER MAJESTY Queen Noor Al Hussein opened the Jordan River Designs (JRD) Fall 1997 Exhibition. The exhibition features many new items for the home, holidays, as well as gifts. The main attraction comes from JRD's latest development project, the Wadi Rayan Production Center.

This production center which was started with a grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), is located in Northern Shouneh on the Jordan River.

Using banana leaves and bamboo canes, the women learn the age old craft of basket and mat weaving, hand spinning straw ropes, among various other skills.

The aim of the project is two-fold, one is

to provide employment opportunities for women, since no other income generating projects exist in the area. The second is to make the community more environmentally conscious by teaching them to re-cycle since banana leaves and bamboo canes were previously burned.

Jordan River Designs is an urban income generating program, that creates jobs for over 1700 women living in low income communities. Other projects that are part of the society are the Prevention of Child Abuse Project, which is designed to tackle the problem of child abuse in Jordan. The objective is to help victims and to promote awareness. ■

Bahraini paintings stand out at Darat Al Funun

By Anna de Maio
Special to The Star

Extremely vivid colors combined in an abundant variety of opulent shapes and rich ornaments are on display at Darat Al Funun. These are only part of a painting exhibition by Bahraini artist Sheikh Rashid Al Khalifa.

Bringing together 45 pieces of his most recent work, the current exhibition is centered on the idea of "landscapes" and "still life".

"The composition of his paintings is like a notebook," Dr Bakir said, in which the artist has joined down glimpses of past events, reminiscences of sensual perceptions, details of garments worn by certain persons on certain occasions, patches of intimate representations, etc. The resulting "landscapes" emanate the warmth and brightness of a summer day spent either in



Al Khalifa.

the open space of a paradise-like garden or in a self-sufficient universe of happy privacy.

The rich color palette of Sheikh Rashid including turquoise, melting ochre, emerald green, light yellow, passionate cadmium, seafoam white in seducing contrasts with sumptuous impenetrable black, has been recognized by Jordanian viewers as Oriental.

Dr Bakir maintained that the painter's choice of colors is "very personal" and "overpasses the location of the Orient."

According to him, Sheikh Rashid's art can be appreciated anywhere, thanks to its universal character and "camouflage". "The camouflage theory referring to animals' ability to integrate themselves in their environment applies in the domain of art when one's creation appears to its various publics as part of their own time and space," Dr Bakir said.

Thereupon, beyond the strong contrasts and light effects that make the viewer feel "the spiciness and richness of the Orient", there is a general human dimension in Al Khalifa's artwork celebrating—in an eclectic artistic language—the beauty of both nature and human body.



Shapes of woman bodies hide their nakedness under patches of beautifully decorated dress fabrics turning into "still life", "landscape" or abstraction. The titles of the paintings are suggestive from this point of view: "Desert Figure", "Five Flowers and a Vase", "Still Life", "Melodies of the Heart".

Born in 1952, Rashid Al Khalifa studied art in Great Britain and is the founder and president of the Bahrain Arts Society. One of the leading contemporary artists in Bahrain and the first important Bahraini artist that has displayed in Amman, he has participated in a great number of exhibitions in Kuwait, Egypt, Singapore, Japan, England, United States and France over the last 25 years. His exhibition at Darat Al Funun runs till 15 November. ■

Replacing myths about women glow in latest paintings by Iraqi artist

By Kofi Attah
Special to The Star

Modest, determined and ambitious are some of the unflattering epithets attached to the qualities of Maha Ismail, the Iraqi artist whose outstanding oil paintings have been on display at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman. Her exhibition seems to be seeking to replace myths and misconceptions about the woman.

When the term women emancipation is applied to mean the struggle for recognition, it is generally misunderstood to mean feminism against social order. But this is not the case with Ismail. Her oil painting exhibition is totally feminine.

Much of the exhibition is dominated by women and the obstacles of life and anxiety. Walking into the exhibition hall is a piece showing a giant hand that is enveloping a woman, of which she says, "we see ourselves being constructed in every way by men."

In another section, she focuses on anxiety and fright with the painting of the sunset. "The sunset means the disappearing

lights and brightness which will be replaced by obscurity and fear. "I hate obscurity," she says.

Ismail believes that her exhibition offers a real breakthrough and truly unique alternative. "I see myself not as a feminist but as a woman with a message that is expressed through my paintings."

Educated at the prestigious academy of Arts, Baghdad, Iraq from 1986 to 89, she has participated in a number of art exhibitions with many talented artists at the Saddam Art Center in Baghdad. Though this is her first solo exhibition she is weaving a web of fame with this fine exhibition of 18 pieces. From a very tender age, she was fascinated by paintings. Her father, a specialist in Arabic epigraphy, influenced her greatly.

Her exhibition proved a great hit as proved by the number of visitors to the RCC. People were struck not only by the paintings themselves, but by the innate message that they sought to convey.

The gallery is enough to hold one's interest although the formula of her paintings is mostly centered on the women in shackles. Each piece gives the same message but in a

different dimension. Right in the center of the exhibition hall is a man gazing mischievously at a woman. A sign of man's brutality against the woman.

A limited number of her paintings touch on other areas other than her traditional man's oppressive attitude towards women. The change creates a great shock value that adds to her magical formula impress. Ismail is fast becoming a part of oriental women whose dreams for a change in a society is crippled by so many things. Apart from the sunset, fingers of men portraying obstacles, there are rocks which may signify creation.

In general her paintings express awareness, love and simplicity which are matched by an increasing exuberant of choice of colors. Obviously, some of her pieces are so organized as to give either a vertical or horizontal thrust, others with their elements spread out. The visitor is at first introduced into Ismail's works as a virtualistic female painting denouncing only the oppression of woman by man. Later he is introduced to an exhibition exploring all the borders of art. ■

The Zarka Team Rises to the "Coca Cola Challenge"

THE ZARKA District sales team of Coca-Cola led by Bassam Hamoudh, a salesman, has been awarded the top prize from its company for the month of September.

As their reward Bassam and his helper, Auallab Al Dajil, were awarded an extra month's salary for achieving (150%) of their sales target.

The Coca-Cola Company grants the prize each month to a different team, as a reward for selling more Coca-Cola than their colleagues.

Mohammed Haikal, the Coca-Cola Company's National Sales Manager, said: "There is no doubt that Bassam and Auallab worked very hard during September and we are always eager to reward hard work. The award will be given each month so that other workers will be rewarded."

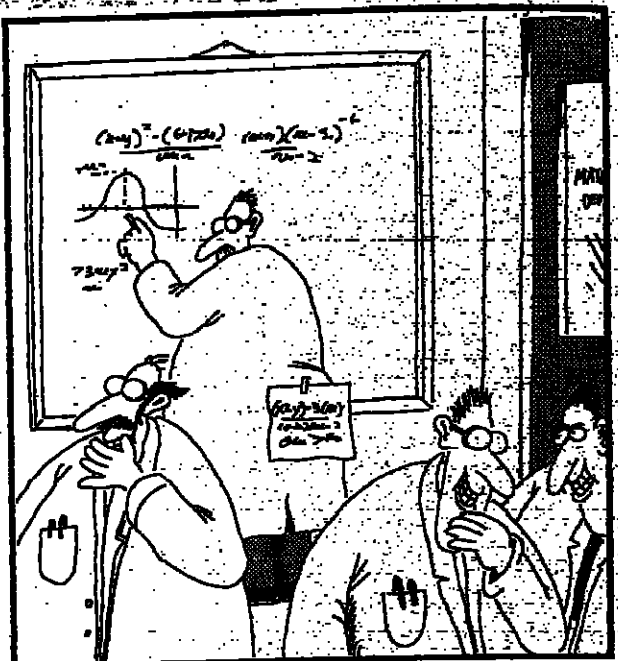
The impressive performance of all the sales teams at Coca-Cola made September one of the most successful months yet for the company in Jordan.

Azem Omar, General Manager of the Coca-Cola Company in Jordan, said: "More and more Jordanians are turning towards the refreshing taste of Coca-Cola each month, this means our company will grow. And we will increase the number of Jordanian employees above the existing number of (700). This is good news for Jordan."

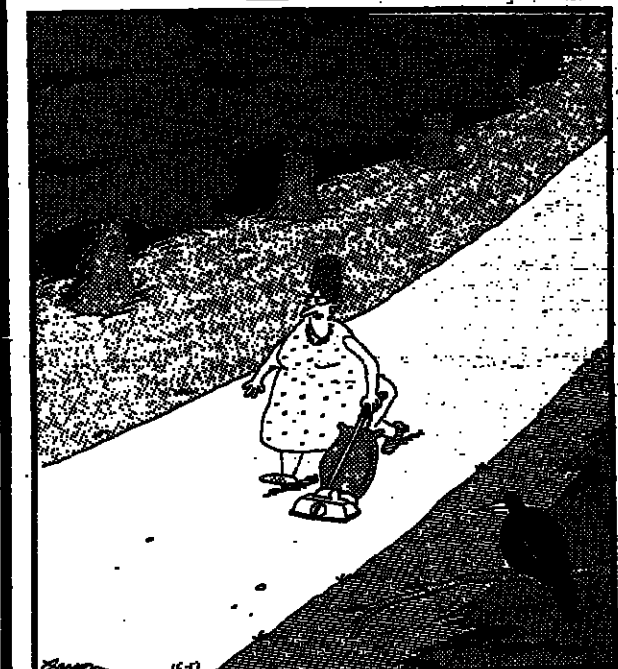
The Coca-Cola company is the world's leading producer of soft drinks, with 900 million units consumed daily in 200 countries world-wide. ■

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"Well, I'll bet it's still there! The hen house I used to watch as a kid!"



The woods were dark and foreboding, and Alice sensed that sinister eyes were watching her every step. Worst of all, she knew that Nature abhorred a vacuum.



Suddenly, there he was, running along the far shore right in front of Bob and Vera, who would always remember they once saw the legendary "Character of the Lake."

AGENDA

- Exhibitions**
 - Paintings by Bahraini artist Sheikh Rashid Al Khalifa continues at Darat Al Funun till 15 Nov.
 - Art Exhibition by Patrice Cudennec continues at The French Cultural Center till 26 Nov.
 - An Exhibition of Jewel at Darat Al Funun continues till 15 Nov.
- Concert**
 - The National Music Conservatory / Noor Al Hussein Foundation, in cooperation with the Ministry of Cultural and Gothe Institute, is organizing a concert featuring (Ensemble Incanto). The concert will be held at Royal Cultural Center on Saturday, 8 Nov. at 8:00pm.
- Film**
 - Le retour de Martin Guerre at the French Cultural Center, Monday, 10 Nov. 8:30 pm.

Queen Noor attends tree planting event

AMMAN (Star)—Her Majesty Queen Noor participated in the Tree Planting event in the International Forest Park on the Airport highway. The event which is held annually by the Canada-Jordan Friendship Society, was a great event that was attended by the Canadian Ambassador to Amman, Michael Malloy, and many from the Canadian community in Jordan.

The goal is to plant trees which promotes the protection of the environment and guarantees the future prosperity of Jordan. The trees are provided by the Park Service of the Greater Amman Municipality.

Mr Malloy thanked Queen Noor for her presence and said that the tree planting event underlines the need to protect the environment and create a greener Jordan, something which Her Majesty takes great deal of interest in. ■

Hannover Boy's Choir excel at the RCC

By Christain Doumit
Special to The Star

A RECORD-breaking musical season continues. On Thursday, 30 October, the National Music Conservatory and the Hannover Boy's Choir, conducted by Heinz Henning, gave a concert at the Royal Cultural Center. The fare which included a Motet by Johann Christian Bach, Franz Schubert's Magnificat in C Major, was followed after the intermission by German folk-songs and two musical compositions by Jordanian composer Abdul Hamid Hamam.

Musical dynasties are not uncommon in music history and the Bach families stand unrivaled in the profession with many of their members actively engaged in the musical worlds and many of them rising among the great masters of their art.

Indeed many Bachs occupied major positions in Weimar, and if one of them resigned or died

his place was immediately taken by a cousin or uncle.

Johann Christian Bach is the younger brother of Carl Emmanuel Bach, Johann Sebastian's second son by his first marriage. No other composer left such deep marks in Mozart's artistic development as Johann Christian, and indeed, Mozart's early chamber music reflects that of Johann Christian Bach. This is fresh, unspoiled and notable for its vivacity of imagination.

"Awake, the voice is calling" is both captivating and seductive. This leads us to Schubert's Magnificat in C major—a hymn to the Holy Virgin. This is the work of a devoted Austrian Catholic—unobscured by doubts or metaphysical speculations. The Magnificat is perhaps best distinguished by a genuine, unaffected warmth and a fine lyrical tone.

For this reason and despite the great importance of the accompaniment, the melodies are such

finished entities that they could be sung unaccompanied whilst still giving perfect satisfaction. The Magnificat is certainly not Schubert's greatest perfect satisfaction. It is certainly not Schubert's greatest opus. As a church composer, Schubert rose to supreme heights in his last great masses in A Flat and E Flat.

Beginning with Schubert's time, the German song occupied such a special place in music that its name "Lied" was accepted and introduced in other languages as if to show that "song" or "chanson" did not adequately express its particular nature.

Some of the German folk-songs that were presented to us last week were quite beautiful, some of them profoundly moving, yet, while the overall repertoire of that evening may not have satisfied the whole audience, everyone appeared to have gone home in an euphoric state. ■

British Council director receives award



Burton

● The Director of the British Council in Jordan, Dr David Burton, was awarded the prestigious Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace last week. The award was given in recognition of his achievements over his 28-year long service in promoting cultural, educational and technical cooperation between Britain and other countries in which he has worked. ■

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NORAN PEYMAN IS MANAGING
DIRECTOR OF KLEINWORT BY

كنا مع الراحل

A special section offering
fresh perspectives on
global issues prepared for
The Star

THE WORLD PAPER

PRINTED IN SIX LANGUAGES
ON FIVE CONTINENTS



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Currency traders discounting SE Asia's economic sovereignty

▶ The region's 'anger, shock and blame'

▶ The market's jaundiced eye

By Hugh Peyman

GOVERNMENTS AROUND Southeast Asia are in shock. Having been praised for years for their efforts to open their economies to foreign capital, they cannot quite believe what is now happening. Praise has turned to sharp criticism and their economies, built on the same foundations that—warts and all—have provided substantial success over the last three decades, are threatened with turmoil, if not collapse.

Suddenly, the future is no longer certain, though it is certainly unnerving. Bogey men are being created, largely for domestic consumption, but also out of anger and shock. Having voluntarily signed on to liberalization, Southeast Asia is now learning some very harsh and totally unexpected lessons. Foremost among these lessons is that national governments are no longer sovereign in their own economies.

This rude shock is reverberating throughout Southeast Asia. The world economy has moved on since the steady days of the 1970s and 1980s, when Asian governments had time to fix their problems as they arose without a financial whirlwind sucking up all the liquidity overnight, leaving a trail of devastation in its wake.

Foreign capital comes largely in two guises. Foreign direct investment, largely from manufacturers who put up plants, hire labor and make things, loves countries like Malaysia and Thailand—and still does.

Portfolio capital is another matter. In the 1980s it, too, was happy with Southeast Asia (apart from the Marcos-ransacked Philippines). Asset bubbles might burst every decade, but the overall returns were more satisfactory than mature markets could provide. Since then it has been a different story. After providing annual returns of 25-30 percent in the early 1990s the party has gone sour. More importantly for Southeast Asia, there are now new players who very rapidly have become influential voices.

These new investors are from the US, largely schooled in the virtue of perfect markets, often with a strong monetarist bent. Their experience of developing economies, if any, has been in their own backyard, Latin America. Burned by two Mexico meltdowns in barely a dozen years, steeped in the history of perceived government irresponsibility, high inflation, collapsing currencies, yawning budget deficits and general instability, these fund managers are much less prepared to take Asia's growth for granted, however good the track record.

Their predecessors, mainly from Europe and within Asia itself, never worried about the current account because it was always funded by foreign direct investment. Malaysia had double digit current account deficits for three years running from 1981 to 1983 and Singapore, now held up as a model of rectitude, had a deficit of nearly 20 percent in the early 1970s. These were taken as an acceptable part of economic develop-

ment that inevitably would decline as the economies matured. There were no concerns about misallocation of resources; world leaders were

facturing investment and imposing best practices on local suppliers.

But when new investors arrived, fresh from obliteration in Mexico, where the current account deficit was only 6 percent, they panicked. The irony was that in 1995, Malaysia's current account deficit was the lowest it had ever been at the peak of the investment cycle. In the past, that same cycle had always returned it to surplus until the next wave of foreign investment turned it back to deficit. But now government-promoted (if not funded) development was mis-trusted on principle.

Overcapacity—Asia's time honored way of gaining market share and sparking growth that took countries like Korea from poverty to prosperity—could not be tolerated, even for a year or two.

What, however, are the longer-term economic prospects for Southeast Asia? Thailand is a separate case. Its problems are principally domestic; over capacity, growing competition and a property bubble older than any other apart from Hong Kong's. These problems will take three to five years to work through, and the economy is unlikely to hit bottom until late 1998 or early 1999.

Depending on how much more damage currency markets do, the rest of Southeast Asia will see lower growth but not recession. The real danger comes from fear of domestic capital flight. If local investors lose confidence, or just take a view that they can preserve their wealth by switching to US dollars, then local interest rates will rise, causing the economy to choke. Already a negative "wealth effect" is depressing consumption as households count their losses in the stock market.

Can Asia help itself? Seemingly not. It looks like everyone for themselves, token attempts at joint action notwithstanding. Arguably, a US\$50 billion package for Thailand early this year, akin

The dueling broke out last month in the unlikelyst of settings—the annual meeting of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in Hong Kong. This normally stodgy affair was the venue of choice for Malaysian leader Mahathir Mohamad to confront the instruments of Western finance, especially the currency speculators, for triggering Southeast Asia's economic crisis. The market, in the person of New York financier and philanthropist George Soros, rose to the challenge. Their argument, over the morphing of political rights and economic rules in the global economy, has the makings of a historical watershed.

The numbers look familiar

Sheep do dirty work for the Forex wolves

By Amitabha Chowdhury

THE REASONS FOR Southeast Asia's currency woes were, it appears, so obvious—written all over the proverbial wall—that only the blind could have missed them. But, of course, we all did.

What were these stark realities that the currency pundits and bank economists point to, these failings that, with textbook inevitability, pounced on the Thai baht? That then attacked all the currencies in the region, dragging them down to their lowest level in years?

The economists now tell us that the current account deficits run by all but one ASEAN country had left a big hole in their fiscal fences, one that attracted the currency speculators, the so-called Forex predators. Only Singapore, which hadn't accumulated a current account deficit, could keep them at bay.

Tidy as this theory is, it leaves a number of important questions unanswered. Foremost among these is: if these factors are so important, why weren't Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia being treated like financial lepers in 1995 instead of the darlings of the world's stock markets?

In early 1995, for instance, Thailand's current account deficit reached

US\$7.3 billion, a figure equal to 8.1 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). By the end of the year, it was \$13.6 billion in the red. The figure for the following year was \$16 billion, and the projections for 1997 \$17.5 billion. Both around 8.5 percent of current GDP. Why, given a consistent three-year trend, do the figures for 1997 ring (belated) alarm bells while those for 1995 and 1996 left analysts unmoved?

The story is the same with foreign debt, which in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines grew in dollar terms but stayed relatively consistent as a percentage of GDP. Overall, the policies pursued by these countries produced consistent year-to-year results between 1994 and 1997. But only this year, it seems, did the currency speculators read the writing on the wall.

So why did a mere corrective phase—the World Bank's view of events—turn into a scary four-country crisis? In large measure because George Soros and his peers succeeded in panicking faint-hearted portfolio fund managers. It was they who reacted the currency corrections by rushing to unload, thereby sending the stock markets into a tail-spin.

In truth, if the fund managers had kept faith in the economies that, in 1994, 1995 and 1996 they judged to be exceptionally sound, then any efforts by the Forex predators would have come to naught. So who's to blame: the portfolio sheep, or the Forex wolves that stampeded them?

The International Monetary Fund and its national central bank cohorts have repeatedly—and mistakenly—chosen to heap the blame on Soros and his peers. But the IMF and the World Bank have been passionately courting the portfolio fund managers because they cor-

rectly recognize them as the most important source of capital for emerging markets. So they have encouraged Southeast Asian countries to depend more on the sheep while knowing full well how easily they are stampeded.

Are there any long-term lessons to be learned from all of this? One obvious one is that no economic "miracle" is forever. The uniformity and consistency of economic management in the region was not the good thing it might appear. The expansionary economies badly need a correction—an induced trend-breaker—which their managers were unwilling to break step and initiate. ☐

AMITABHA CHOWDHURY IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR FOR *The World Paper* IN ASIA



Malaysia's Mahathir: 'We need [currency] manipulators as much as travelers in the old days needed highwaymen'

By Andrew Hillon

JUST BECAUSE JEFF SACHS is an arrogant SOB doesn't mean he is wrong. Indeed, in a trenchant July article, Harvard's wunderkind put his finger on the problems of Asia's wounded tigers:

► First, financial liberalization always attracts yield-hungry foreign capital which, in turn, almost always leads to unwelcome currency appreciation.

► Second, the spending boom financed by this foreign money also tends to lead to asset price inflation—and, almost inevitably, to a property bubble. This is exacerbated when banks suddenly find themselves free to borrow in the international markets—at low interest rates and apparently (though delusionally) with no foreign exchange risk.

► Third, the situation gets a bit murky when (as is the norm in most emerging markets) owners (and managers) of banks look to them, not as equity investments, but as personal pocket-books from which they can draw for whatever hare-brained real estate scheme takes their fancy.

► Fourth (though Sachs inexplicably failed to mention it), there is the near-total blindness and learning-like behavior of the international fund management community.

The good Dr Mahathir Mohamad may rant against George Soros, but the truth is that the average run-of-the-mill fund manager was pouring money into East and Southeast Asia over the last few years with Nicholas Leeson-like obduracy, despite warning signals flashing red.

Take Thailand, only a couple of years ago raising global money at just 80 basis points over US Treasuries. Surely, anyone with half a brain could have gone out to, say, the "Golden City" development in the Bangkok suburbs and counted the empty offices, the "see-through" buildings. Americans should have learned the lessons of the 1980s Savings and Loan crisis; Japanese bankers, for whom Thailand is as Mexico was to the US, had even less excuse since they are still living the downside of their own property bubble.

Even the IMF (at least, so Stanley Fischer now says) noticed that something was wrong—though it claims that it lacked the leverage to twist the Thai's arms until the wheels fell off the economy. But not the men in suits in London, Boston and Tokyo: they went on pouring money into a country where the hottest night club was Below Zero—a boite so cold that Bangkok's glitterati could flaunt their furs. Thailand was on a binge funded by foreign capital and fanned by the deliberate politicization of a traditionally clean Treasury and central bank bureaucracy.

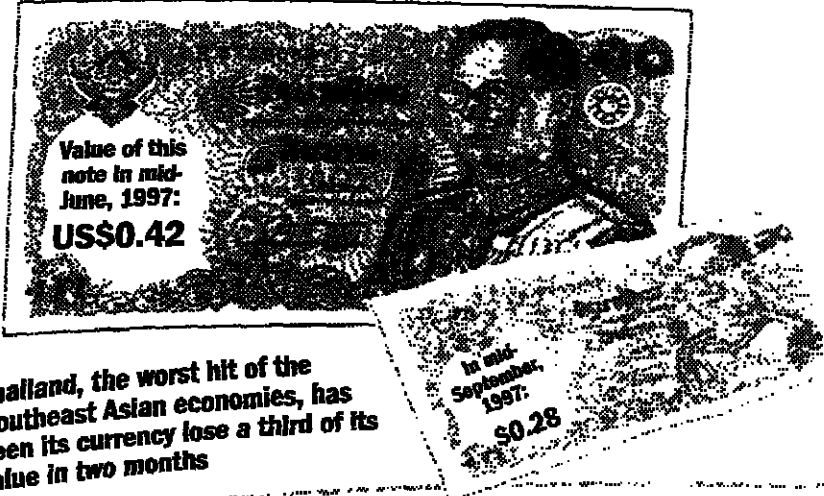
Never mind whether Soros pulled the plug, or whether it was local speculators. The gig was long ago, and the real pity is that the collapse didn't come two years earlier. Now, "smart" money is (for the most part) out, and the pain will be felt

disproportionately by the nascent Thai middle class which had been suckered into sinking its savings into speculative real estate.

Malaysia is a bit trickier—not least because Mahathir and Soros have a history (as they say), which probably tempted the PM into his intemperate attack. Notwithstanding the Petronas towers, a couple of white elephant dams and the whole Proton experience, the Malaysian economy was not quite on the same mad binge as Thailand. But calling Soros a "rogue" and "moron," trying to lock investors into the Kuala Lumpur stock market by banning short selling and calling for currency "manipulation" (undefined) to be a criminal offense, are moves that are not calculated to win the confidence of fickle global money managers.

True, learning-like as ever, ► JAUNDICED EYE PAGE 2

A FLIGHT OF BAHTS



Thailand, the worst hit of the Southeast Asian economies, has seen its currency lose a third of its value in two months

to US help to Mexico in 1995, might have stabilized markets by showing Asian resolve to replace nervous foreign capital with their own.

But the opportunity has been missed—and now the problem is many multiples larger than it was as the contagion of lost confidence spreads to the rest of Southeast Asia. ☐

HUGH PEYMAN IS MANAGING DIRECTOR OF KLEINWORT BENSON RESEARCH ASIA.

Glee at Asia's misfortunes may be premature

Latins putting out welcome mat for migratory money

By Sergio Sarmiento

THERE WAS A SENSE OF vindication in some Latin American countries when the Thai baht went into an abrupt nosedive. After all, international economists and bankers have made careers out of unfavorable comparisons between the profligate Latins and the thrifty Asians.

Now it was the turn of the Asian Tigers. A series of devaluations began in Thailand in mid-1997 and rippled through the rest of Southeast Asia. The phenomenon was reminiscent of the "tequila effect" that hit Mexico and the rest of Latin America in late 1994 and throughout 1995.

The Latins' sense of vindication was magnified by the fact that much of the currency that fled Asia was moved to Latin America by international money managers. But this is not time for us Latins to become overconfident. The "baht effect," just as the tequila effect of 1995, shows that devaluations continue to be extremely damaging to a country's economic health and that no emerging economy is completely free of the risk of an abrupt devaluation.

Rather than celebrate the stumble of the Asian countries, we Latins should be making sure that we do not fall prey again to the ills of drastic devaluations.

For citizens of developed countries, with stable economies, it is difficult to

understand why devaluations can be so damaging. Adjustments in the value of the US dollar, the Japanese yen or the Deutsche Mark are constant and no one seems to care. Developed economies just roll with the exchange punches.

But in developing countries abrupt devaluations generate crises of confidence and capital flight. In the two days following the devaluation of the Mexican peso of December 20, 1994, Mexico lost US\$10 billion in a currency panic. In the following months, and until the exchange market stabilized in late 1995, the loss rose to \$50 billion.

This is not a phenomenon exclusive to Mexico. Thailand lost some \$17 billion in the weeks following the devaluation of the baht. Other developing countries that have devalued their currencies have also faced massive bouts of capital flight followed by deep recessions.

This should not surprise us. Devaluations wipe out a substantial portion of investors' assets and, thus, they deteriorate investors' confidence. In emerging economies, that are largely dependent on foreign short-term capital, the impact of devaluations is always much larger than in developed economies that have stored greater amounts of domestic long-term capital in their financial system.

Mexico is a fine example of how damaging a devaluation can be in a developing country. In the period of 1955 to 1976, when the peso remained fixed to the US dollar, the Mexican economy grew at a rate of more than 6 percent a year, with almost no inflation, and benefited from a constant

influx of foreign capital. As soon as cyclical devaluations began, in 1976, growth declined, inflation exploded, capital flight started and domestic savings dropped. Compare this with

ment might have been in the handling of its finances. The economic foundations of Thailand were saner than Mexico's when the crisis hit.

Mexico's economy is in much better shape right now than it was in 1994 or 1995. Growth was 7 percent during the first six months of 1997, with a declining inflation and a government budget surplus.

But this is no insurance against future devaluations. In spite of their recent problems, it is clear that countries in Southeast Asia have a built-in advantage over Latin America—Asians save more than Latins.

This willingness by Asians to save means that their economies are not as dependent on volatile foreign capital. If Mexico's domestic savings rate is not increased significantly over the next few years, the risk of possible new devaluations and new economic crises will remain present.

Obviously, this no time for us Latins to gloat. Rather, it is the time to prepare for a possible future when the influx of foreign capital will not be as abundant as today. And the only way to prepare for this is to build up a base of long-term domestic savings that will make our economies less dependent on speculative foreign capital. ☐

In spite of their recent problems, it is clear that countries in Southeast Asia have a built-in advantage over Latin America—Asians save more than Latins

Great Britain, which showed significant growth after the 1992 devaluation of the pound sterling.

The Mexican devaluation, for example, changed an economic growth rate of 3.5 percent in 1994 to a precipitous decline of 6 percent in 1995. Thailand's devaluation merely brought down an economic growth that was averaging 8 percent a year to an expected 2 percent expansion in 1997. Thai growth, moreover, is expected to rebound to 3.5 percent or more in 1998. It doesn't matter how overvalued the baht was or how careless the Thai govern-

that they are markets you cannot emerge from in an emergency.

It would be wrong to say (as some red-blooded capitalists insist) that speculation never does damage. There has been evidence (in Europe as well as in Asia and Latin America) that certain countries and currencies have been targeted. But there is usually (indeed, almost always) a trigger—and in this case it was very clear:

► that massive foreign capital inflows to the Asian region had pushed up exchange rates to unrealistic levels, particularly in Thailand and the Philippines; ► that the assumption of a permanent dollar "peg" had encouraged domestic borrowers to look for foreign funds at lower interest rates, despite the fact that many investments would only generate domestic currency to service that debt; ► that too much of this money was going into property (Thailand) and prestige infrastructure projects of doubtful viability (Malaysia); ► that the market for the kind of exports which had underpinned the tigers' stellar performance over the last 15 years was starting to be

eroded as the Chinese elephant rumbled into town.

Soros? What about China?

The last point is worth noting: Of the Asian economies touched by the latest crisis, only Singapore has made a major, sustained effort to abandon low value-added economic activity. Indeed, in most other regional economies, the assumption had been that the main engine for future growth would be moving mid-tech assembly work to economically disadvantaged rural areas—as Japan and Korea had done before.

But time scales are shorter now. China is muscling in on these markets with lower labor costs and massive economies of scale. Even if the Southeast Asian countries get out of this mess with their shirts, they will face some very difficult calls on how to reorientate their economies to higher-value product. Maybe, in the end, they will need to give a vote of thanks to the speculators who woke them up to that threat. ☐

ANDREW HILTON IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE LONDON-BASED CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF FINANCIAL INNOVATION.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IT DEPENDS ON YOUR ANGLE

A look at your "Wealth of Nations Triangle Index" in the Sept. 1997 issue left me a little dismayed.

At first glance, the index appeared very methodical and encompassing. However, when I tried to get from your major categories, especially your social environment, to the specifics—listed in extremely small type—I became chagrined at the superficiality of your criteria for making judgements.

Take, for example, your listing of Israel as fifth (from the top) in Social Environment. You refer to political stability as a one of the categories for determining this ranking, yet Israel is a country where people are regularly blown up in public locales. I do not think that fits my notion of stability in a good social environment.

Again, you factor unemployment into your measure of social environment. Official Israeli figures may show a very low level of unemployment, but the moment the Israeli government blocks Palestinian access to their places of work in Israel, there is instant unemployment for all those people.

I then turned to inclusion of numbers of cars per capita as a measure of social environment. Personally, I do not think we still measure social amenity by the volume of traffic on the streets, and I notice you fail to account for the effect pollution from cars has on people's health. At that, I lost most of my faith in the sophistication of your approach, no matter how many sides your index has.

—Karl Jaeger
Bath, UK

Points well taken. To the careful Index reader however, there is hidden value in the Index's multiple variables, as well as flaws.

Southeast Asia's economic difficulties were partially foreshadowed by the latest *Wealth of Nations* Index of 35 emerging economies published in March and September by one of the economic variables, the current account deficit. Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand all recorded significant current account deficits in the latest Index. Thailand's 8.1 percent was the second highest of any nation in the Index.

Moreover, Indonesia and Thailand lost considerable ground in the overall rankings during the latest six-month measuring period. Indonesia dropped 5 places from 22 to 27, and Thailand from 11 to 13. Because the Index is designed to measure the long-term health and wealth of developing countries based on 63 variables (21 economic, 21 social environment, 21 information exchange), such drops are precipitous, and can indicate fundamental problems presaging more immediate economic stress.

—The Editors

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THE WORLD PAPER

Published by World Times, Inc.

210 World Trade Center

Boston, MA 02210 USA

Tel: (617) 437-9000 Fax: (617) 437-9415

email: info@worldtimes.com

Web site: www.worldpaper.com

Volume 20, Number 10 © World Times, Inc.

The Star's GUIDE

Programs on JTV from 8-14 November

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Twinkle
2:30—Muppet Show
3:00—Pumpkin Patch
3:15—World of Geo
4:00—The Vally Between
4:30—Neighbors
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Are you Been Served
8:00—Newly Weds
8:30—Prism
9:10—Time Trax
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: Canvas
12:00—Ellen

SUNDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Little Rosey
2:30—Jonny Quest
2:50—The Magic School Bus
3:00—Energy Express
3:40—Lucky Luky
4:00—American Chart Show
4:30—Tarzan
6:00—French Programs
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Fresh Prince of Bel Air
8:00—Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
8:30—Hotshots
9:10—Renegade
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—The Bourne Identity
11:15—The Jewel in the Crown

MONDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—The Show With the Mouse
2:30—The Cowboy of the Moomesa
3:00—Gillette Sports Special
3:15—Riding High
3:30—Animal Show
4:00—Oliver Twist



You Bet Your Life, Tuesday 7:35 pm

4:30—Neighbors
5:15—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Murphy Brown
8:00—The Health Show
8:30—Babylon 5
9:10—Highlander
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Emergency Room (ER)
11:15—Homicide

TUESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Sandocan
2:30—C.R.O.
3:00—Skippy
3:30—The Album Show
4:30—Square One TV
5:15—French Programs
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—You Bet Your Life
8:00—Skeleton Coast
8:30—Encounter
9:10—Hollywood Remembers

THURSDAY

10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Magaret Volant
11:15—The Guilty

WEDNESDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—Jonny Quest
2:30—Super Dase
3:00—Secrets of Treasure Island
3:30—Spell Binder
4:00—Munsters Today
4:10—Border Town
4:30—Neighbors
5:00—French Programs
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—High Tech Culture
8:00—Some One Like Me
8:30—Challenges
9:10—Kung-Fu
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—Land's End
11:00—American Gothic

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—New Kids on the Block
2:30—My Little Fairy Tale
3:00—America's Funniest People
3:30—He Shoot He Scores
4:00—National Geographic
4:30—The Boy from Andromeda
5:00—French Programs
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Trivial Pursuit
8:00—Parenthood
8:30—Lois and Clark (Superman)
9:10—Oprah Winfrey Show
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Feature Film: Awakening
12:00—Music Show

FRIDAY

2:00—Holy Koran
2:10—The Adventure of Teddy Ruxpin
2:30—Fred And Barney
3:00—Wish Bone
3:30—Lucky Luke
4:00—Family Matters
4:30—NBA
5:00—French Program
7:00—News in French
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Life on the Internet
8:00—Are you Being Served
8:30—Adventures of Brisco County
9:10—The History Makers
10:00—News at Ten
10:30—Best Seller
11:30—Daddy's Girls

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

SAMEDI
5:00—Secrets de famille
5:30—Des chiffres et des lettres
6:00—URSS

7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
L'œil de Colomb

DIMANCHE

5:00—Secrets de famille
5:30—Des chiffres et des lettres
6:00—Magazine
Faut pas rêver
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine pour tous
Zini

LUNDI

5:00—Secrets de famille
5:30—Des chiffres et des lettres
6:00—Thalassâ
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine scientifique
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI

5:00—Bêtes pas bêtes
5:15—Des chiffres et des lettres
5:30—Secrets de famille
6:00—Savoir plus santé
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Orient sur Seine

MERCREDI

5:00—Micro kids
5:15—Regarde le monde
5:30—Secrets de famille
6:00—Ushuaia
7:00—Le journal
7:15—E = M6

JEUDI

5:00—L'invité de marque
5:30—Sous vos applaudissements
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Le dessous des cartes

VENREDI

5:30—Madame la conseillère
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine

Programs are subject to change by JTV

Amman cinemas

- Philadelphia I (Tel: 634149): *To Wong Foo*
- Philadelphia II (Tel: 634149): *Golden Eye*
- Plaza (Tel: 699238): *Double Team*
- Concord I (Tel: 677420): *Client*
- Concord II (Tel: 677420): *Too Hot To Handle*
- Galleria I (Tel: 634149): *Scream*
- Galleria II (Tel: 634149): *Hercules*

Movies & Videos

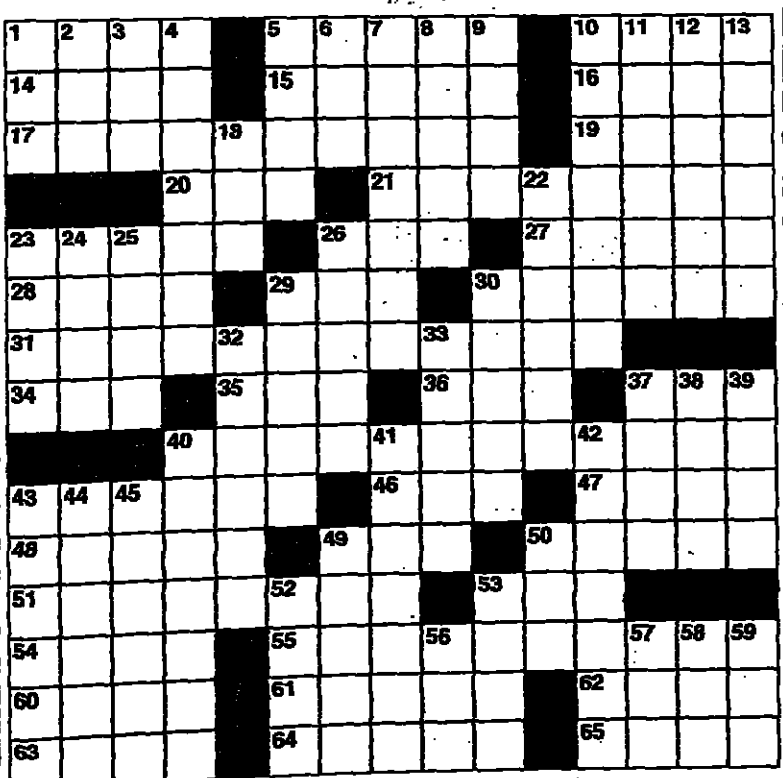


Excess Bagage

● The film follows the exploits of Emily T. Hope (Silverstone), an emotionally-neglected rich girl, and Vincent Roche (Benicio Del Toro), an unsuspecting car thief who is inadvertently drawn into Emily's scheme to stage her own kidnapping. The film directed by Marco Brambilla



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



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ACROSS

- Uses frugally (with "out")
- Acquatic carnivore
- Slowly tight
- Russian river
- Treaty or pipe
- Excessive praise
- Mrs. Cary Grant, once
- Mimic
- Baltimore's Ripken
- Collecting facts
- Boop or Ford
- Prefix for angle or com
- Sovereign
- Felpe or Moises
- Na Na
- Proclaimed noisily

DOWN

- Permit
- de plume
- Poet's word
- Talk
- Lunch, perhaps
- Biblical landing site
- Half a fly
- Soprano Gluck
- Sophia of movies
- Grain
- Shoelace end
- Model
- Analyst's org.
- Prepare for publication
- Puzzle constructor, often
- Tear apart
- Medicinal plant
- Art deco name
- PGA pegs

ACROSS

- Caucasian native
- Pitcher Nolan
- Terminate
- Operator
- A Peron
- Private room
- Birthstone
- X
- Chinese puzzle
- Pollution
- Indicator
- Director Clair
- Of the skull
- Light sword
- Get even
- Came together
- Coral reef
- In concert
- Idol
- Shet. Fr.
- Racetrack figure
- Hitchhike

DOWN

- Proboscis
- Endured
- Away from the coast
- Grand dinner
- St. John or Ireland
- Zenith
- Huh?
- Invents
- Plant parts
- Porter of music
- Herb of the Tijuana Brass
- Aide for traveling musicians
- Come in
- Monsters
- mode
- In that case
- Map
- Vane dir.
- Shed a tear
- Greek letter
- and Stimpy

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: What you see is what you get with the moon in Aries. Allow plenty of time to reach your destination, because traffic will be slow.

Aries (March 21-April 19). You come into your power and your experience is quite valuable. Everything works out fine. These are pretty good days to ask for a raise.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). An objective third party can help you understand your partner. Explain what's going on for valuable insights. It looks like someone's leaning on you pretty hard. Better get your work done on time.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Watch out for subtle innuendoes. Most of the action is taking place behind the scenes. You and your friends rip and tear.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Contact with a foreigner could lead to true love and adventure. You understand each other despite the language barrier. A hot-tempered supervisor is in a terrible mood. He or she has no tolerance for excuses, so don't even try any.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Go ahead and splurge on something for the house even if you have to go without a toy. You're in a rowdy mood.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're in the spotlight. A partner can't seem to function without you. Isn't it wonderful to be indispensable? There's a little more stress but don't worry.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Pay attention. An arrogant older person wants the answer he or she has in mind. Don't even try to win athletic competitions. You'll make more points as a spectator.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You'll be tempted to call in sick. You want to stay home in bed. If you can, do. A partner has a good idea. Listen carefully, but don't make up your mind.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Try not to let a personal soap opera interfere with your work. The boss would not be amused. Launch into your exercise program again. You could stick with it this time.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). If you're a musician or photographer, these are perfect days to practice. Postpone everything else. A friend makes unreasonable demands.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You might get the money you need, if you ask nicely. Do your research. Your previous experience could lead you to the perfect answer.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). You're lucky in an exotic setting. Start learning a new language from a native speaker. You're in the mood to shop. Take care; that can get expensive real fast.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: A gentle playmate could be tougher than you thought. Don't push a moral issue. Stiff competition will make you better at your work this year.

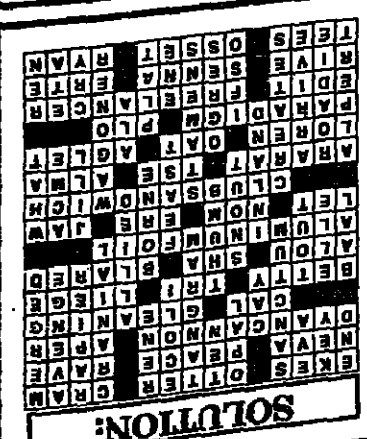
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Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Le marathon poussif de la télé

La télévision jordanienne a retransmis les élections pendant plus de 25 heures. Un marathon pas toujours facile à avaler. Témoignage d'une télégraphie ordinaire.

Trop sérieux, trop long, trop lourd, trop adjetifs pour décrire la couverture des élections par la télévision jordanienne. Pourtant, avec des correspondants qui transmettent leurs reportages depuis toutes les régions du pays, elle a essayé de nous donner une vision la plus complète possible sur le déroulement du scrutin.

Les deux chaînes, la chaîne arabe et la chaîne anglaise, se sont associées toute la journée sauf quelques interruptions, pour nous permettre de suivre l'événement.

La retransmission a commencé très tôt le matin dans un studio principal bien équipé en informatique et relié avec les autres studios disséminés à travers le royaume.

Dans le studio central, deux présentateurs, une femme et un homme, ont joué les rôles de médiateurs avec d'une part les différents correspondants et d'autre part les invités. Mais souvent ils n'ont pas réussi à coordonner leurs efforts : soit ils parlaient en même temps et on avait du mal à les suivre, soit ils parlaient plus que leurs invités et on se demandait pour quelle raison ils les avaient fait venir.

Politiciens, professeurs, journalistes, analystes et autres se sont succédés sur le plateau de la télévision pour débattre.



Le Roi Hussein a tenu une conférence de presse au Centre culturel royal, retransmise en direct par les deux chaînes de télévision jordanienne.

Mais la plupart du temps ils ne cessaient de nous parler avec beaucoup de sérieux de la beauté de cet événement national. Nous avions l'impression qu'ils tenaient une conférence plus qu'ils ne discutaient.

Quant aux distractions prévues pour alléger la lourdeur de la couverture électorale, elles étaient loin de nous distraire. Des chansons régionales, des danses folkloriques, des scènes touristiques, des documentaires

sur l'histoire du pays ou du parlement et même des devinettes, autant d'entractes qui ajoutaient encore à l'ennui général.

Seul les présentations réalisées à partir du studio virtuel parvenaient à nous sortir de notre torpéur. Il s'agit d'un studio vide sur les murs duquel, par le biais de l'informatique, sont projetées des images. Une nouvelle technologie très avancée et impressionnante à voir mise en œuvre à la télé. Le présentateur n'arrêtait pas de dire que la Jordanie était le seul pays du Moyen-Orient à posséder un tel système. Cela en devenait agaçant surtout que lui-même avait parfois des difficultés à suivre la technique pendant quelques secondes, il se retrouvait incrusté dans la carte projetée de la Jordanie avant de s'apercevoir qu'il devait être devant.

Il est clair que la télévision jordanienne a fait un effort exceptionnel pour couvrir les élections pendant plus de 25 heures sans interruption. Mais combien d'entre nous ont été capables de suivre plus d'une heure de programme ? La presse avait annoncé le grand lifting de la télévision jordanienne à l'occasion de ces élections législatives. Ce fut tout au plus une petite opération chirurgicale.

Samaa Abu Sharar

L'Irak continue de bloquer le travail des experts américains

● L'Irak a bloqué mercredi pour la troisième journée consécutive des inspections de l'ONU en refusant que des experts américains y participent. Les autorités irakiennes ont empêché ces experts membres de trois équipes - balistique, chimique et biologique - de prendre part à des inspections sur trois sites différents, a déclaré Alan Dacey, un responsable de la Commission spéciale de l'ONU chargée de désarmer l'Irak (UNSCOM). Ce nouvel incident intervient alors qu'une mission de l'ONU était attendue hier à Bagdad pour tenter de faire revenir l'Irak sur sa décision de ne plus traiter avec les inspecteurs américains de l'UNSCOM et de les expulser. L'Irak a décidé de reporter son ultimatum sur l'expulsion de sept experts jusqu'à ce que la mission de l'ONU présente son rapport au Conseil de sécurité. Ce rapport doit être présenté lundi prochain. Le chef de l'UNSCOM, Richard Butler, a pour sa part annoncé le report jusqu'à la semaine prochaine des vols de l'avion espion U2. Les Irakiens avaient menacé d'abattre l'appareil américain - utilisé par l'UNSCOM - qui devait assurer deux missions cette semaine.

Une 13^e Chambre docile à souhait

Les 80 nouveaux députés qui vont entrer au Parlement sont en majorité proches du pouvoir. Pour la plupart, ils ont assis leur victoire sur le système tribal. Quant à l'opposition, elle se retrouve réduite à la portion congrue en raison de l'appel au boycott des islamistes, suivi, semble-t-il, par une fraction significative des électeurs.

Malgré le

grand battage médiatique du gouvernement sur le grand succès des élections, l'échec est évident : le taux de participation, quel que soit son mode de calcul (par rapport aux électeurs inscrits, 44% ou aux électeurs inscrits qui ont retiré leur carte, 54,6%), a baissé de plus de 10% par rapport à 1993. Un écart significatif qui consacre la victoire des partis de l'opposition qui ont appelé au boycott. Les régions les plus peuplées d'Amman, d'Irbid ou de Zarqa se sont en effet peu mobilisées (le taux le plus bas a été obtenu à Amman avec 37% d'électeurs encartés ayant voté). En revanche, comme d'habitude, les provinces du sud ont connu une forte participation étant donné la compétition féroce entre les tribus pour faire entrer leur champion au Parlement (Taifila a battu tous les records avec 78% de participation).

Les nouveaux membres de la Chambre des députés, dans une écrasante majorité, sont des pro-gouvernementaux et ont construit leur succès sur des bases tribales.

Néanmoins, les résultats ont donné lieu à quelques surprises. Le Parti national constitutionnel (PNC) a vécu une véritable hémorragie avec deux élus (dont le secrétaire général Abdul Hadi Majali à Kérak) sur 12 candidats officiels. Mais au moins six candidats non déclarés de ce parti pro-gouvernemental font égale-

ment leur entrée au parlement.

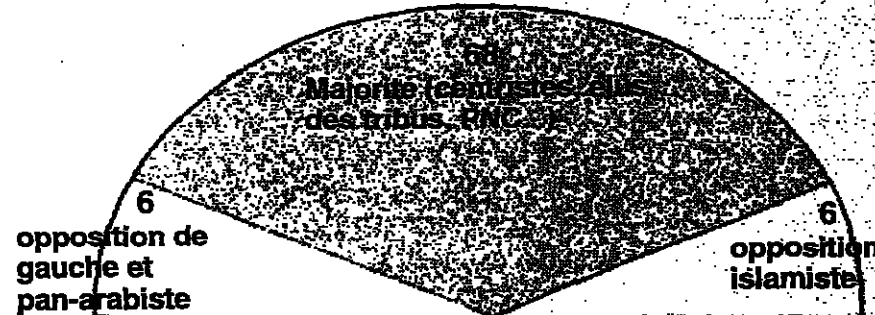
Autre enseignement de ce scrutin : les Jordanien veulent voir de nouvelles têtes, en tout cas pas celles de la chambre sortante. En effet, de nombreux députés de la XII^e Chambre ont été battus, remplacés par des anciens élus de 1989 ou de nouveaux visages.

Enfin, les Jordanien ne veulent pas de femmes en politique puisqu'aucune des 17 candidates n'a été élue. Toujan Faïçal qui brigait le siège circassien dans la 3^e circonscription d'Amman a été battue par l'ancien secrétaire général du ministère de l'information, Nayef Moula. L'absence du sexe féminin à la chambre des députés sera durement ressentie par les organisations de femmes jordanien qui avaient préparé longuement et avec minutie ces élections. C'est donc un recul pour la démocratie de ce pays et pour la « moitié » de sa population en particulier.

Il est certain que les Jordanien sont nombreux à ne pas attendre grand chose de cette nouvelle Chambre. La loi électorale dite de la « voix unique », sous le découpage injuste des circonscriptions, a réduit le pouvoir législatif de tout un royaume au rôle d'un simple conseil municipal expédiant les affaires courantes.

Suleiman Sweiss

Elections 1997



La 13^e Chambre des députés élue le 4 novembre 1997

Quel gouvernement pour demain ?

Théoriquement, le gouvernement d'Abdel Salam Majali n'est pas obligé de présenter sa démission avec l'annonce des résultats officiels. Certes, le Roi Hussein, dans une lettre adressée en avril dernier à Majali, lui demandait de former un cabinet avec pour objectif prioritaire l'adoption de décisions importantes telles que la loi provisoire sur la presse et les publications, la poursuite de la coopération avec Israël, la participation à la conférence de Doha sans parler de l'affaire Mecharaf et autres initiatives économiques - preuve que l'équipe Majali n'est pas un simple gouvernement de transition dont le rôle se limiterait à la mise en œuvre d'une consultation.

On peut donc envisager le maintien du cabinet Majali dans ses fonctions. Peu après l'ouverture par le roi de la première session de la nouvelle chambre des députés, l'actuel Premier ministre pourra présenter le programme de son gouvernement pour les 4 ans à venir et demander le vote de confiance.

Mais l'avis peut être différent selon le regard du gouvernement. Et c'est ce regard qui va peser sur la formation du prochain cabinet.

En effet, les élections ont été marquées par une victoire sans précédent des forces de l'opposition. Les islamistes ont obtenu 17 sièges, ce qui est un record. Les forces de gauche et pan-arabistes ont obtenu 17 sièges également. Les forces pro-gouvernementales ont obtenu 46 sièges.

Quelle sera l'impact de cette victoire ? Difficile à dire. Le Roi Hussein a exprimé sa confiance à l'égard du gouvernement Majali. Mais la pression de l'opposition sera forte. Le gouvernement devra-t-il se réformer ? Ou se maintenir ? C'est à voir.

Nouvelles du Pays

Diversissement

Qui a osé imiter le Roi ?

C'est Nabil et Hisham qui au début des années 90 ont révolutionné le théâtre jordanien. Rencontre avec des comiques qui ont gardé leur bon sens... du rire.



Malgré le départ de Nabil, Hisham continue à écrire des sketches avec sa nouvelle équipe de joyeux caricaturistes.

L'histoire de ce succès fulgurant a commencé par hasard. « J'étais en train d'écrire le premier George Bush qui parlait à l'époque d'un Nouvel ordre mondial. J'ai été inspiré par ce discours et j'ai eu envie de créer un théâtre politique comme qui s'intéresse à la situation au Moyen-Orient », se souvient Hisham Yanes, l'un des fondateurs du théâtre. Hisham Yanes, un contacté mon collègue Nabil Sawalha qui était assez impressionné par l'acte. La pénurie de théâtres en Jordanie ne leur a laissé d'autre choix que de transformer une salle de cinéma en théâtre. « C'est vraiment dommage, souligne Hisham, en parcourant notre histoire, on se rend compte que les activités théâtrales existent depuis longtemps en Jordanie. La preuve : les amphithéâtres romains dans la contrée-ville ou à Jérash. On n'a pas su poursuivre sur cette voie ».

Pas de censure
En 1963, ce sont les débuts du théâtre jordanien. Plusieurs tentatives ont lieu comme des interprétations des pièces de Molière et Shakespeare. Malheureusement ce genre de

théâtre n'a jamais fonctionné. L'adaptation de pièces de théâtre égyptien n'a pas été couronnée de succès non plus, quoique les émissions égyptiennes envahissent encore aujourd'hui notre petit écran.

Bref le théâtre de Nabil et Hisham devient au début de cette décennie le premier genre et impose une véritable révolution. Les deux compères cherchent alors à travers leurs scripts à exprimer la souffrance des Arabes. « On voulait que le spectateur s'identifie aux sketches », explique Hisham. Il s'agissait de critiquer de manière constructive. Nous voulons transmettre un message, une morale. Mais le plus fort c'est qu'ils sont parvenus à éviter la censure. Aujourd'hui aucun de leurs scripts ne passe pas les ciseaux d'Anastase. Pourtant ils imitent les personnalités en utilisant leurs vrais noms que cela soit Saddam Hussein ou même le roi. Dans un de leurs sketches, ils imitent le souverain hachémite téléphonant à son Premier ministre Kabarti pour lui annoncer que demain il n'aurait plus de travail. Mais finalement ils critiquent de manière polie

sans avoir recours aux injures. « Voilà le secret de leur célébrité », interrompt Amal Dabbas, l'une des principales actrices du spectacle.

Spectacle pour tous

« Cela fait 7 ans que je travaille avec Nabil et Hisham. Au début, je ne voulais pas prendre de risques, j'avais peur, confie-t-elle, je croyais qu'ils allaient passer le reste de leur vie en prison. Leurs scripts étaient toujours de critiques. J'ai regretté quand j'ai vu les succès qu'ils avaient, mais j'ai eu de la chance. L'écriture principale est tombée en leur sein et j'ai alors pris ma place. Aujourd'hui je ne pourrais les quitter. J'aime cette atmosphère où règnent de bons rapports et l'esprit d'équipe. En plus, j'adore la façon dont Hisham aborde un sujet, je sens que je suis en train d'écouter notre société. La seule chose qui me manque actuellement, c'est Nabil ». Nabil a en effet quitté la Jordanie pour aller s'installer en Angleterre. La troupe a perdu l'un de ses principaux éléments. Cela n'a pourtant pas empêché Hisham et Amal de pour-

suivre leur route. Avec les nouveaux membres qui se sont joints au groupe, ils répètent jour et nuit pour leur nouvelle pièce. Le pouvoir au service du peuple. Le titre est inspiré du slogan La police au service du peuple, que l'on retrouve sur toutes les voitures de la force publique jordanienne. Une comédie sur l'abus de pouvoir aussi bien au niveau social qu'au niveau politique. La pièce traite ainsi du pouvoir des religieux sur les croyants, du mari sur la femme, de l'agent de police sur le particulier, mais aussi du pouvoir d'Albright, de Netanyahu etc... « C'est la première fois qu'on présente un spectacle sans Nabil », confirme Hisham. J'espère que le succès continuera d'être notre allié. De toute façon, cela dépend de nous-mêmes et du public surmonté. Si celui-ci nous demande d'arrêter notre travail... on le fera immédiatement ». Sans transition, Hisham enchaine : « Il est vrai que Nabil ne manque énormément mais nous travaillons pour notre société. L'argent n'a aucune importance. Nous parlons de causes humanitaires qui touchent chacun de nous qu'il soit Arabe ou étranger et le succès ne con-

duit sans cesse à améliorer la qualité de notre travail et même à élargir nos activités d'où l'idée de créer le théâtre des enfants ». Effectivement les scripts écrits par Hisham ne sont plus réservés aux adultes. Les enfants ont aussi leur part dans le Théâtre de Nabil et Amal. La même équipe a mis au point une comédie musicale sur le thème du Livre de la jungle et destinée aux plus jeunes.

Plusieurs publics mais aussi plusieurs nationalités. Nabil et Hisham ont représenté la Jordanie à de maintes reprises en Europe, aux Etats-Unis, au Qatar et même en Israël. A chaque fois, ils ont joué avec beaucoup de professionnalisme et remporté un grand succès. Lors de ces représentations à l'étranger, leurs textes n'ont subi aucune transformation preuve de l'universalité des sujets abordés.

Rana Kawar-Bageen

Théâtre de Hisham et Amal. Rainbow Street. Le pouvoir au service du peuple, à partir du 7 novembre, tous les jours sauf vendredi à 20h30. Tarifs de 4 à 10 JD. Renseignements : 625-155

La grand-messe des Guignols de l'info

Chaque soir de la semaine en clair et en direct sur Canal+ (chaîne codée payante), les Guignols de l'info parodient les hommes politiques et les stars, en commençant l'actualité. Il s'agit d'un spectacle politico-médiatique construit sur le modèle d'un journal télévisé avec présentateur vedette et invités. Le programme né en 1988 doit son succès à une idée simple mais efficace : c'est l'œil du téléspectateur qui est pris en considération. « Les personnes elles-mêmes ne nous intéressent pas mais leur image médiatique, oui », explique Franck Argüillère, directeur artistique des Guignols. Peu importe qui sont vraiment Poirer d'Arvor ou Chirac, nous nous attachons à ce qu'ils donnent à voir à la télévision ».

Chaque marionnette est actionnée par deux manipulateurs et la voix, assurée par un imitateur. Au-delà d'un simple spectacle humoristique, les Guignols de l'info renvoient aux téléspectateurs l'image caricaturale de la société à travers le prisme du petit écran et rompent avec la langue de bois... « Atchao, bonsoir ».

Sur le chemin des urnes

Les électeurs les plus courageux ont dû affronter la pluie et les familles des candidats pour voter. Rappel d'une journée sans flammes mais semée d'obstacles.



Journée d'élection, journée de récréation pour les enfants du camp palestinien de Baqa'a

7h. Les bureaux

de vote, installés dans les écoles publiques d'Irbid, ouvrent leurs portes. Début d'une longue journée pour les responsables des urnes dans l'attente d'improbables électeurs.

10h. Seulement 1,5% de courageux ont affronté le mauvais temps. « C'est très normal », assure un superviseur qui poursuit en essayant de cacher son inquiétude : « C'est sûrement les pluies abondantes qui les empêchent de venir ».

A l'extérieur des bureaux de vote, c'est le même calme. Des petits commerces frémissent de vie et de rares cafés ouverts en ce jour férié abritent les personnes fuyant les trombes. Peu de transports publics, à Irbid comme dans les villages alentours. Nombreux sont ceux qui ce jour-là devaient aller au travail mais n'ont pu s'y rendre : double malchance. « C'est vraiment terrible », s'indigne Ma'in, l'attendu depuis quatre heures un bus, un taxi, n'importe quoi mais je ne vois rien venir ».

11h. Les bus et les taxis justement commencent à s'activer. Mais les travailleurs tremperont n'en profiteront pas. Tapissés de banderoles et de posters électoraux, ils s'en vont disperser les électeurs vers les bureaux de vote : les jeunes s'enthousiasment et scandent le

nom du candidat qui s'étale en grosses lettres sur l'avant du véhicule. Des enfants distribuent des affiches électorales aux passants résignés.

13h. 17% des électeurs encartés se sont déplacés. Parcourent semé d'embûches. Le « bon citoyen » entre dans le bureau de vote, muni de sa carte d'électeur et d'une pièce d'identité. D'abord guidé par les nombreux policiers, il se retrouve dans un long corridor, seul, face aux familles des différents candidats. Leur présence dans les couloirs mêmes des bureaux est bien entendu illégale mais les autorités ferment souvent les yeux, l'ennui aidant. « Avez-vous voté ? Pour qui allez-vous voter ? Vous connaissez notre candidat ? Regardez notre affiche, regardez son CV, s'il vous plaît, votez pour lui ! ». Avant de questions de médians politisés dont il n'est pas toujours facile de se départir.

15h. Les urnes sont fermées de ruban adhésif, fournées dans un sac, ficelées comme de vigiles rois et scellées à la cire rouge, avant d'être conduites sous escorte policière, politique et populaire jusqu'au centre de dépouillement.

16h. Echantillons de résultats et premières émeutes. Les familles s'invectivent ou se lancent des pierres, malgré l'intervention de la force publique. Sauf quelques voitures cabossées, tout se termine dans le calme. Les candidats concierges attendront toute la nuit le résultat final. Les électeurs fatigués sont depuis longtemps rentrés chez eux après une journée pluvieuse et sans flammes.

Nahed Al-Khlouf

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6 NOVEMBER 1997

W E E K E N D

THE ST

Indonesia's real-life Jurassic Park

By Walter Glaser

MORE THAN 9ft long, and looking deceptively docile, the Komodo dragon lay sunning itself on a patch of bare ground. It could have been a scene straight out of Jurassic Park.

The shape was that of a huge lizard of which it is the largest existing species and the scaly skin looked tough enough to dent an axe. There were scars faintly visible all over the body probably the legacy of earlier battles with other dragons.

The massive feet, large claws extended on each, were resting loosely in ungainly positions. The only indication that it was not asleep was the open eye. That was following our every move.

"Don't get too close," said our Indonesian guide and park ranger. "These dragons can be quite dangerous. Not long ago they killed a child." The dragon looked sedentary. I wanted pictures of it in action. Perhaps running. And feeding. So I asked the ranger what we could do to get it to move.

With a smile he reached into his shoulder bag and pulled out a large fish so freshly caught that it was still flapping. Holding it by its tail, he threw it to a spot some 50ft from the dragon. I was not prepared for what came next.

Before we had time to focus the beast had taken off like a rocket. Now I could see why naturalists were saying that a Komodo dragon can outrun any human.

The dragon braked to a halt alongside the fish. It took just a split second for it to unhinge its jaw, enabling it to take the whole fish in one swallow. That done and the dragon, known as the ora in Indonesia, now standing surprisingly high on its legs, looked around for more. Its appetite aroused, it moved its head from side to side, making a noise like a balloon being deflated. Eyes glaring, it started to move a long, yellow, forked tongue.

"He used that tongue like a finely tuned nose," said the ranger in a low voice, keeping a watchful eye out. "That tongue gives him his sense of smell. And it is deadly accurate."

The dragon kept waving its head from side to side, tongue flicking faster and faster. "He's picked up the scent of the other fish in my bag," whispered the ranger. "There's a wooden platform behind us that the dragon cannot climb. Slowly head for that, and the moment I've thrown the second fish, run for it and get up there quickly. I'll be right behind you."

The dragon had stopped waving its head from side to side and turned directly towards us. He was smelling the fish and associating us with that scent. Had we simply stayed there, the first fish might have been the appetiser, and we the main course.

As we backed off, the ranger quickly reached into his bag and pulled out the second large fish. With a quick under-arm throw he sent it through the air to land to the side of the dragon. Another rocket-like pounce and the second fish was gone. In the meantime, closely followed by the ranger, we were running flat-out for the platform, climbing up its rough stairs just as the dragon, the second fish gone in a gulp, started to follow at rapid pace. Our hearts were pounding as it reached the steps, but it was not built to climb them.

Instead, it stood at the base of the platform, tongue flicking. From time to time it would hiss and exhale sharply. Its breath smelled like a cross between a Manila garbage dump and a sewage disposal facility.

The dragon waited for half an hour and then, realising that its main course would have to be sourced elsewhere, lumbered into the rough forest that circled the clearing. I could not help thinking of the old nursery rhyme: "He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day."

We had come to Komodo on a 120ft, 150-tonne motorised sailing yacht, the eight-cabin, 12-crew Perintis, or, discoverer, which belongs to the Kupu Kupu Barong Resort in Bali.

Most people know about exotic Bali, and the lucky ones have been there. But I had read about the Komodo dragons at a time when transportation to that island was almost non-existent. To sail there in comfort on a motorised yacht, see the dragons in their natural habitat, and snorkel coral reefs that matched anything the Great Barrier Reef could provide, was an opportunity I could not resist.

That evening, while enjoying a delicious dinner on deck, Captain Herman Hasle, the Norwegian skipper of our yacht, who, married to a Balinese, has been sailing the waters for 16 years, told us more about these dragons. The largest lizard on earth is a giant species of the monitor lizard they are directly linked to the dinosaur.

Hasle said: "I am sure you have noticed that these animals have very long forked tongues which they not only use for tasting, but also for smelling. They lay eggs,

but are cannibalistic. So once hatched, the baby ora climb the first tree they can find, and stay there most of the time.

"Since ora lose their ability to climb trees around the age of six, by which time, being lighter, they can outrun old ora, which only eat other dragons when these are very small anyway. And they have no other serious natural enemies."

Komodo dragons are lightning fast hunters of their prey: water buffalo, deer, wild boar and sometimes even horses. They can outrun a cheetah during a very short sprint. They often bring down their prey by biting through the Achilles tendon, and then eviscerate their victims.

On July 18 1979, Baron Rudolf van Biber-egge, a Swiss tourist, was killed by dragons, as was another tourist on a different occasion. The gastric juices of the dragon are so powerful that they can dissolve the bones and hoofs of deer, boar and buffalo. Their jaws are also hinged in the same way as those of large snakes, and they will think nothing of swallowing a 60kg boar in one sitting.

"The ora were nearly on the way to extinction," Hasle continued. "In the 1980s, the numbers had decreased to around 1,500 to 1,800. The government thought of making them a tourist attraction, and so paid locals to breed goats which were then strung up so that the dragons could feed on them, and tourists could take the pictures. In a few years, the ora had almost forgotten how to hunt."

"International zoologists who had been watching the process realised that this was a disaster in the making, and persuaded the government to wear the ora in such a way as to make sure that the dragons would resume hunting."

The good news is that the numbers are growing again. There are now estimated to be more than 3,000 ora on Komodo, about 1,500 on neighbouring Rinca, and some hundreds on eastern Flores.

Dinner was over and, as we sipped our coffee, the moon was rising over the Indian Ocean. Our yacht's how wave shone like neon, an effect, Hasle told us, of the local plankton that made swimming at night an eerie experience. However, it was not something that we would be likely to try. The ora, who like their distant cousins, salt-water crocodiles, are excellent swimmers, have on occasions been seen way off-shore. ■

Financial Times Syndication

'Red Corner'

Ego trip to China

By Stephen Hunter

"RED CORNER" does, in fact, indict a system of oppression that crushes the liberty and the spontaneity out of all it rules. Unfortunately, it isn't the Chinese political system, it's the American star system.

The star is Richard Gere, a beautiful man and a heck of a human being, who demands that the world care more about him than it does about the faceless billions of subjects who still languish under the boot of a homicidal gerontocracy. Good intentions be damned, what fills the movie is the poison vapor of vanity. The results are a trivialized melodrama that can never find room to accommodate both the heat of its anger toward China's government and the radiance of its star's self-regard.

Gere plays Jack Moore, a high-priced legal gun for some huge Hollywood entertainment mega-corp who jets into Beijing to close a deal with the minister of information (banal James Wong, who's been playing Yellow Peril roles for years). Jack succeeds in opening China to the satellite-propelled glories of "Baywatch" by some truly aggressive bootlicking, a scene that made my flesh curdle. That night, celebrating in a westernized Beijing hot spot, he meets and is seduced by a beautiful Chinese model... (He is savagely awakened by the police the next morning to discover that his lover has been murdered and that his prints are on the murder weapon.)

Thus begins the movie's best passage, the sleek, powerful Western operator's tour of the Chinese judicial system, which—can this be a big surprise to anyone except a Hollywood filmmaker?—is brutal, repressive, indifferent to the individual and as unkind to entertainment lawyers as it is to dissidents. Director Jon Avnet, not exactly a heavy hitter (his big one was "Fried Green Tomatoes"), manages here alone to capture the immense cruelty of the system and the powerlessness of the man caught in it. Gere's



Richard Gere

slick Jack Moore goes from starring in the jet-set novel of his life to playing the chump in a cruel jest devised by Franz Kafka with a bear of a headache. But the movie soon enough falls back into formula and cliché that sucks the life out of it. Worse, it's really not about China at all or the plight of the Chinese people or even China's oppressed film directors and other artists—rather, it examines a generalized phenomenon that could be sited in Moscow in the '30s or Selma in the '50s, Little Rock in the '60s or Washington in the '70s: a despotic, corrupt bureaucracy that seeks only to sustain itself. In fact, in an earlier version it was set in Russia, based on experience by screenwriter Robert King in Italy.

The film enters its most conventional stage when Moore gets an appointed lawyer, and, hey, it's only the most beautiful woman in China (Bai Ling). And soon enough, not just legal tips but hormone-fired glances

are all it takes to get the story rolling. But it's a pity that the movie is so much about the star system and the American dream that it forgets to be about China. The movie is a tragedy of the American dream, not a tragedy of the Chinese system. The movie is a tragedy of the American dream, not a tragedy of the Chinese system. The movie is a tragedy of the American dream, not a tragedy of the Chinese system.

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SKY NEWS

PROVE

THE STAR'S

COMPUTING & HIGH TECH

Edited by Zeid Nasser

Notes from an attendee of GITEK '97 in Dubai: GITEK, Class of 1997

By Jabra Ghneim

Special to The Star
Going to the Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEK) is like going to school again, because there are so many new things to learn every year. This year it was the show of the Internet.

It is quite obvious that the Arab computer industry is way past infancy.

At Gitek '97 in Dubai you witness an advanced computer market in action. Not only high technology being demonstrated, transferred, and sold, but also bright Arab minds that understand how to speak the language of modern computer business from all over the region.

In the exhibition this year the king of all applications was Hotmail (www.hotmail.com). I really had to wait some time to get a seat at the Internet cafe. Ninety-five percent of all terminals running at the cafe were running Hotmail. All those people, including me, were anxious to see their e-mail and follow-up on their work, or check messages from home. When the place was too crowded, I would swing by the Zaka stand.

That stand featured a new technology that allows users to access the Internet via satellite using ordinary satellite dishes. They told me that it will be available soon in Jordan through Global One, their official representative. This technology rocks. All those anxious to have faster linking times will love the speed this service offers. The Internet will become, at last, an alter-

native entertainment method for Jordanians.

Another hot trend at Gitek was video on demand. The ability to broadcast video pictures and full multimedia through the network painlessly and quickly. All the companies exhibiting in halls 6 & 7— which were dedicated for the Internet and telecommunications technologies—were

What impressed me most was the wide variety of services offered by companies and the way companies were trying to serve and anticipate every single need of customers in the region. Not only that, but companies' representatives were trying hard to educate their potential customers on how to use the technology and how it would benefit organizations.

At one of Sun's seminars, Sun's representative was teaching the heads of technical departments on how to sell the benefits of Sun's data warehousing solutions to their bosses. So, techno-heads do the selling and marketing for Sun products inside their own organizations! Everybody at Gitek tries to indoctrinate and convert you. Unfortunately I have to say that none of the Arab companies present offered a seminar or a lecture. For many Arab companies, selling technology is still a way to make a living and not selling a way of life.

Educating potential customers and those who help educate potential customers is, regrettably, a low priority for Arab software publishers.

One example of this mentality is the owner of an Egyptian manager of a software company who said that it was the obligation of the Arab computer press to seek after him and his company not the opposite. When I asked him for a demo of his software, he immediately said that it was only available for Unix machines and thus he can't give me one. When I told him I had access to a



exhibiting one variety or another of video on demand solutions. All in attendance were so impressed, I truly believe that 1998 will witness some breakthroughs in the Middle East as far as video on demand technologies are concerned.

The amount of technology exhibited, especially by foreign multinational giants, was more than one's mind can handle. The marketing methods applied give all those interested in studying the marketplace a very insightful look.

An explanation of major Internet & connectivity concepts

International Capacity

International Bandwidth of the provider. The numbers are not the way to judge an Internet provider, but are rather a clue for its size. Usually the larger the provider, the better is the overall service.

Optical vs. Satellite

Every communication line has 2 parameters to compare with bandwidth and latency. Bandwidth is the amount of information, the line is capable of transferring in a given amount of time. Latency is the time that it takes for information to travel from one end to another. Compare communication line to a water pipe. The wider a pipe is, the more water can run through it—that's bandwidth. The faster the water flows through pipe, the less time it will be delayed inside it—that's latency.

Optical lines have very low latency. Latency of an optical line from Jordan to U.S. is much less than a Satellite line. Satellite lines are at least 7

times slower. Note also, that an average latency of the phone line, used when connecting with modern, is 250-300 ms.

So optical v.s. satellite is one of the most important criteria. So when your ISP sells you his "fast" lines, ask him not for the bandwidth, but whether they are optical or satellite.

Why does latency matter? When you click a hyperlink in Microsoft, it takes some time to resolve the address of the new site, to connect to it and to download the page. The smaller latency is, the faster this is accomplished. So, the latency is relevant when interactive Internet applications, such as WWW, Telnet or Voice are concerned. However for large data transfers, like FTP or WWW download, this parameter is not important at all.

What about bandwidth? It is not important for you, unless the provider has too many users, in such cases lines become saturated. Imagine a sink to the pipe, with-

out any problems, but if you open the water tap too much, the water will start accumulating in the sink, and reach the pipe with a big delay. If you open the tap even more, the water will get out of the sink and some of it will be lost. This is a very close model of a communication system. So, if the provider doesn't have enough bandwidth, your information will be delayed and some of it may even be lost.

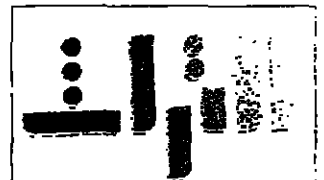
European vs. USA only connectivity

The situation on the market is such, that it is almost twice cheaper to get a line to USA than to Europe. For that reason, all ISP's establish their connectivity to the Global Internet via USA. However, in such cases, in order to get to Europe, all the information has to go over the ocean twice. This introduces a much larger delay than a direct line to Europe would. ■

News Update

Turath launches 'Encyclopaedia'

● Turath Center for Computer Research, a Jordan-based software house, has recently introduced the final version of its 'Golden Encyclopaedia' (Al Mawsu'ah Al Tahabiya) which is a comprehensive resource of the Prophet Mohammad's Tradition and related sciences. The product was officially released at GITEK '97 in



Dubai. It is available on CD-ROM and is currently being marketed across the Middle East. For more information, contact Turath in Amman at telephone 871773.

● Apple Newton E-Mate
● Apple has witnessed much success with its E-Mate 300 which blends the Newton PDA and notebook concepts together. Educational organi-

zations in the USA have responded to it phenomenally and the E-Mate offers a strategic product for Apple. The E-Mate runs the Network Operating System 2.1 and incorporates a very attractive case, complete with light-pen holder.

STS appointed as Dell distributor

● Specialized Technical Services (STS) has been recently appointed as a second distributor for Dell computer in the Jordanian market.

This appointment comes as part of Dell's establishment of regional operations and in the aim to increase Dell's penetration into the Jordanian market. For more information, contact STS at telephone 827611.

INTERFACE

BY ZEID NASSER

A 'computerized' election

AS THE elections come to a close, it's worth taking a brief look at the computerization and automation that the Jordanian Government applied to the electoral process.

As many public officials stated, the computers and information technologies utilized during the elections by the Ministry of Interior were very advanced and enabled precise information to be exchanged between the different parts of the Kingdom, and the central operations room at the Ministry of Interior and Jordan Television (JTV) studios.

Without a doubt, this was a complex computer system that has been in the works for many months and which performed well under the pressure of the election process.

Getting back to JTV, the 'Virtual Studio' equipment that was installed in the studios was nothing short of amazing. It is, undoubtedly, one of the first in the region, and represents a gigantic leap in visuals and information displays. Also, throughout election night, it worked fine.

In the true spirit of a country on the threshold of the millennium, Jordan is utilizing advanced computer technologies to facilitate its democratic process and the skills and abilities of Jordanian technical staff were put to the test in this massive computer networking set-up. To all of these people we say Ya' tekum Al Afa.

Pentium II systems arrive

FOLLOWING SEVERAL months of its launch, and contrary to expectations that the Intel Pentium II processor will not be featured in desktop systems available in the Middle East before the end of the year, it looks like we'll be seeing 233MHz and 266 MHz Pentium II systems at the Middle East Technology Show (METS) '97.

One company I know of is Al Ra'ed Al Arabi Computer Corp., distributors for Leo computers, who will be showing a 266MHz Pentium II.

They graciously allowed me to examine the inside of a Pentium II system, and I was blown away with the size of the processor. It is huge, and comes in a black casing, incorporating its own fan unit!

Although I've seen it in magazines, seeing it sitting there on a motherboard made me realize the massive change that the Pentium II introduces in terms of changes in the Intel architecture.

For one thing, when it was first introduced, there were many incompatibility problems faced by motherboard makers, with only Intel and 1st Mainboard (from First International Computer) being able to run Intel II processors flawlessly. Now, however, all worldwide manufacturers of motherboards have realized the nature of the problems and are producing completely compatible and compliant motherboards for the Intel Pentium II.

In any case, it should still be a while before we see the 300MHz or 333MHz Pentium II in Amman. Now that a sheet power machine. Sometimes I wonder: when will the megahertz race reach 1. I can't imagine a PC with 10,000MHz clock speed! I'm sure the whole speed measurement standard will change altogether. ■



http://
www.Arabia.
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Diego Maradona makes eighth farewell to football

By Jimmy Burns

THE GREAT Argentine footballer may really be ready to hang up his boots, this time, writes Jimmy Burns. Diego Maradona, still considered by many as one of the greatest footballers of all time, this week marked his 37th birthday by announcing he was quitting the game.

During one of the most controversial of sporting careers, Maradona has "retired" on seven previous occasions, only to bounce back again in a blaze of publicity. However, there are indications that this time it could really be the end.

"The footballer in me has come to an end. Nobody's sadder than me," Maradona said in a TV broadcast as he prepared for what he called his "saddest birthday". The player told viewers that he had promised his father last month he would quit if ever reports of his long-term drug habit resurfaced.

The Argentine media have been reporting this week that Maradona last Sunday failed his second doping test in less than two months after a lacklustre performance with his team, Boca Juniors. It was reported on Thursday, however, that the test results were negative.

Two factors explain Maradona's survival until now as a player despite a drug habit that had its origins when he played for Barce lona from 1982 to 1985.

First, there is his extraordinary physical resilience. This has allowed him to pull back from injury and the brink of self-destruction to produce moments of football magic that have not generally been drug-induced.

The clearest example of this was in the 1986 World Cup in Mexico, where he brilliantly led his team to victory, notwithstanding his infamous "hand of God" goal against England.

Second, Maradona has spent most of his career in his native Argentina, enjoying huge popularity and virtual immunity from any long-term sanction. The Argentine football authorities and the government have rallied around this national hero whenever he has risked

international disgrace.

During the 1990s he has been closely identified with the government of President Carlos Menem, whose Peronist party has always claimed the loyalty of most Argentine football fans.

In 1994, after Maradona was thrown out of the World Cup finals in the US after testing positive for a "cocktail" of drugs, President Menem wrote personally to Joao Havelange, president of Fifa, appealing for clemency from football's governing body.

Mr Menem, who finances his own skills at football, has also been linked to a rather lenient attitude adopted by his country's judiciary whenever Maradona has found himself before the courts.

Yet lately Maradona's status as a demi-god has come under increasing strain. Friends, club officials, and doctors, have broken a conspiracy of silence to express publicly their fears for Maradona's mental and physical health.

If every comeback has proved a little more difficult, his latest this year has veered between tragedy and farce. Maradona prepared by training with Ben Johnson, the Canadian sprinter stripped of Olympic glory for taking drugs.

Soon after he started playing again with Boca Juniors, Maradona tested positive only to deny the charge in conspiratorial terms which even some of his own supporters found difficult to take seriously.

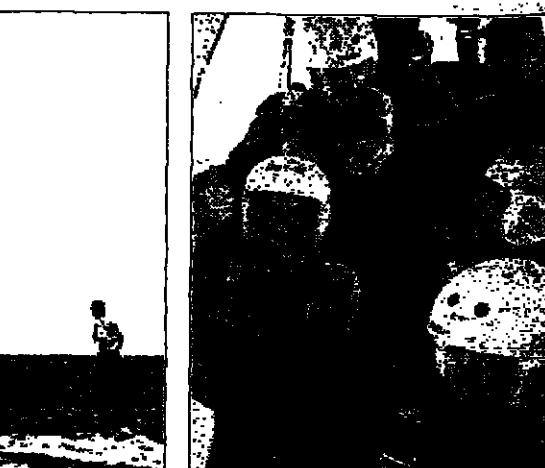
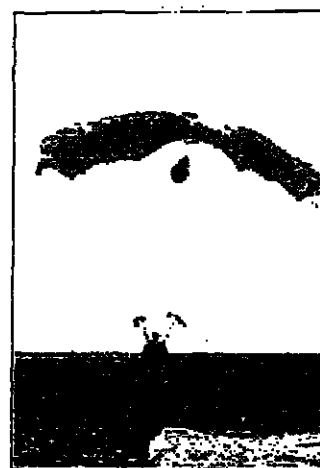
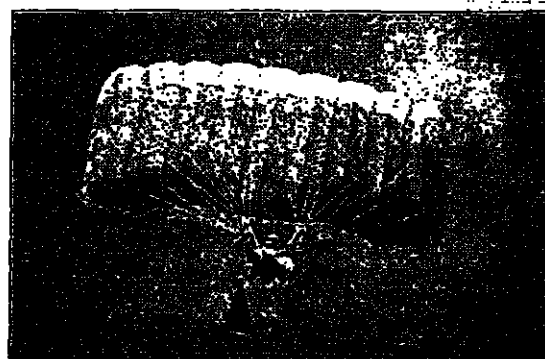
Maradona's latest decision to retire follows the Peronists' crushing defeat at last weekend's mid-term elections. The victorious Alliance opposition grouping has campaigned strongly on an anti-corruption ticket that has sent shivers through Argentina's football mafia.

That could mean that Maradona will be able to count on much less protection than he has enjoyed until now. Less clear is what he will do with his life now if he really has quit for good. As the one-time Argentine international coach Cesar Menotti once remarked: "Diego without his football is like a cowboy without his Colt '45." ■

Financial Times Syndications

Parachuting over the skies of Kheribet Al Samraa

AMMAN (Star)—The Royal Jordanian Parachute Club (RJPC) held its first activities last week over the skies of Kheribet Al Samraa near Mafrag. A group of young men and women were flown from Marka's Civil Airport over the Kheribet in what was seen as the most exciting event. Four thousand feet up into the air, the parachutists jumped triumphantly. The jumps were made in the morning and evening. Parachutists included Ghassan Al Jury, Tamara Sykelly, Dana Toucan, Dina Feidi Zakariyah and Nassif Khouri, Khalid Alalami, Itesam Khouri, Samir Abd Al Aziz, Seif Al Sandi, Samih Janakat, who is the parachute leader in the RJPC later talked about the objectives of the club and how he intends to make parachuting a full time sport in Jordan. Two Britons also made the jump. One was a 68-year-old lady, Martha Holts and her son Mark. ■



The 68-year-old lady went for the jump

INSIDE



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